

A Discourse concerning  
**PRODIGIES:**

WHEREIN

The VANITY of PRESAGES by them is  
reprehended, and their true and proper  
Ends asserted and vindicated.

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*The Second Edition corrected and enlarged.*

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To which is added a short Treatise concerning  
**Vulgar Prophecies.**

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Liv. Hist. l. 24. 9.

*Prodigia multa nunciata sunt, quæ quo magis credebant simplices & religiosi homines, eò etiam plura nunciabantur.*

Bacon. De Augment. Scient. l. 2. c. 13.

*Natura rerum omnibus viventibus indidit metum ac formidinem, vitæ atque essentia suæ conservatricem, ac mala ingruentia vitantem ac depellentem: Veruntamen eadem Natura modum tenere nesciæst; sed timoribus salutaribus semper vanos & inanes admiscet; adeo ut Omnia (si intus conspici darentur) Panicis terroribus plenissima sint; præsertim humana, & maximè omnium apud vulgum, qui superstitione (quæ verè nihil aliud quam Panicusterror est) in immensum laborat & agitur, præcipuè temporibus duris, trepidis & adversis.*

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L O N D O N,

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61. Bring in Supplement  
of Savings from  
the other books

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## THE PREFACE.

**T**He most proper Objects of admiration in the Divine wisdom, are *Βαθὺ καὶ πολὺ*, the unsearchable depth and rich variety thereof. Rom. 11. 33.

That admirable diversity of gifts and abilities of minde, vouchsafed to men to serve the necessities of those times and places to which they are appointed; That elegant variety of Beings in the world; That grateful disparity of occurrences which the history of every age of the world entertains us with, give assurance that there is a riches and pleonasm (as of Grace, so) of Wisdom in God: as which (like some full word that cannot be delivered of all that notion and sence with which it is pregnant, without variety of expressions) cannot be understood and made out without the large paraphrase of such a multitude of excellent instances and displaies thereof.

And the faithfulness of Nature to its Original laws of motion, the continuance of all things as they were from the beginning of the Creation, awaken a considerate mind into

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*a quick and lively sense of the depth thereof. Nulla litura est in libro naturæ. God never saw it necessary (as upon maturer thoughts) to correct and amend any thing in this great Volume of the Creation, since the first edition thereof: which sufficiently resolves us, that all things were issued at first by a Mind that doth not look but to a few things, but that was able to look the whole systeme of the Creation quite through, and comprehend at once the several capacities and mutual aspects of secondary Agents, from the beginning of time to the end thereof.*

*This general constancy and harmony of Nature in its operations, is not so much removed as commended by (those petty discords) prodigious occurrences, whose rarity sometimes commands our notices and regards. These are but the Anomalies of Nature, some temporary exceptions from her more common rules of motion; she runs sometimes against her bias, when the rub of some unusual impediment disturbs her, but quickly recovers into her more easie and native course. No*

*a* Heb. 12. 28.

*a kingdom is simply ἀσάλευτον. but that of heaven, and no law absolutely immutable but that of eternal Righteousness. For Righteousness is the Image of God, a transcript of the Nature of him with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning; but*  
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*Nature is but the Art of God, and so admits Variety.*

Now these steppings of Nature out of its more common road, have been received by the faith (phancy) of most times as God's Heralds to proclaim his purposes of war and vengeance upon men. It hath been concluded that as Nature in its usual freedom, doth declare the glory and power of God; Nature vext by Art, and turn'd upon it self by bayting of one piece of the Creation with another, doth discover the art of God coucht in the subtile engine of the World; Nature quite conquer'd, as in a miracle, doth report and confirm the truths and counsels of God; so Nature casually disturb'd, as in a Prodigy, doth proclaim his approaching judgments.

The design therefore of the present Discourse, is with freedom and sobriety, to make enquiry how far any kind of Prodigies, Signal or Penal, may be drawn into consequence to conclude the counsels of heaven from them; and whether that Faith and Religion with which the multitude receive them, be not especially owing to those too credulous and superstitious principles Fear and Ignorance which usually manage and deprave their affections and conclusions.

I readily foresee that as to some persons (more easily infected by the corrupt air of popular

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*suffrages*) Religion will seem too much concerned in the Argument, to be dishonored to a question; so to others of more severe and examined principles, it will appear to hold too much of imagination or imposture, to receive the credit of a serious debate; and therefore had I designed no higher in these papers then barely to be publick, I should have made choice of some more obliging theme; and wherein I should be less forc'd to go on trust for my Subject. But that which thus far reconciled me to the Argument, was a regard to the Profitableness, Pleasure, Seasonableness, of a Discourse thereupon.

First, It will, in design at least, be profitable to very great purposes, viz.

First, To secure the peace and tranquillity of common life. For if when ever the sky is red and lowring, the face of heaven

*Si fulserit, si tonuerit, si tantum aliquid fuerit de celo, si ostenti simile natum factumve quippiam, (quorum necesse plerumque aliquod eveniat) superstitioso nunquam liceat quietam mentem consistere. Tul. de Divin. l. 2. Eccles. 9. 7.*

puts on a different color and appearance from what it usually looks upon us with, we must conclude some approaching storm in the state, every man must needs hold the peace and serenity of his mind by a very crackt and litigious title. <sup>c</sup> How can a man, as he is counselled, <sup>d</sup> eat his bread with joy, and drink his wine with a chearful heart; if every strange accident must perswade him that there is some sword of vengeance hanging over his head (by a threed) ready to fall upon himself, or that common body he relates to, in whose welfare

fare



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*fare every good man concerns himself? Mens hearts will be alway failing them for fear, and for looking after the things which are coming on the earth, Luke 21. 26.*

*A sense hereof gave occasion to the <sup>c</sup>Heathen Poet (whose Philosophy or Divinity served him not to reprehend the superstition of Prodigies) thus to implead the Majesty of heaven for alarming the world continually with these direful Omens of an approaching evil:*

—Cur hanc Tibi, Rector Olympi, <sup>e Lucan. Pharo  
sal. l. 3</sup>  
Sollicitis visum mortalibus addere curam,  
Noscant venturas ut dira per Omina clades?

*Which words (that I may the better serve my purpose of them) I thus make English:*

Why doth Heavens Lord foretel mens fate  
By Omens? and so, antedate  
Their evils; twice unhappy! must  
Men take up misery on trust?

I'd yeeld *extempore* my breath,  
Nor would I dy for fear of death.

*And (indeed) I understand not how many men could reconcile their secure and quiet thoughts to their vain perswasions concerning Prodigies, but that I observe their usage is upon any such occurrences to charm down their fears with such like soft and smooth generals; What these things signifie time to come will*

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will declare! *words, comfortable in the fourth, and frightful but in the first degree.*

*Secondly, It will also serve the honor of Religion, which the common reverence of Prodigies doth greatly trespass upon; and that,*

1, As it detains men under a constant Pædago-  
gy to many servile fears. *Whence Religion is easily concluded a great Adversary to (what it mainly designs to bring on upon the world) a true generousness and universal freedom of spirit, and that its whole business is to subdue the spirits of men to some little observances, and feminine fears. Hence men quickly grow weary of it, as of a yoke that continually galls them, and conclude themselves gainers if they may but purchase manhood with Atheism. This was that especially which gave Epicurus the confidence of thrusting God and Religion quite out of the world, and salving all the Phœnomena of Nature without calling in any assistance from the power and providence of any Agent superior to Natural, even that bondage which he observed mens ears bor'd unto by the Religion of his times, which was little besides a servile dismay at, and cold observance of, the signes of heaven, direful Omens, prodigious occurrences, against whose evil abodements men arm'd themselves with (paper against pod-guns) a few ineffective Rites and Ceremonies,*

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*monies. Great fears but especially of God, bind in the powers of the soul, debar it the easie use and enjoyment of it self, and therefore the soul hates that womb of Religion that is conceived to bear them. Religion can never be amiable, till it appear designed not to throw men from themselves by perpetual jealousies of God, but truly to settle and assure them.*

2. The superstition of Prodigies commits no small waste upon Religion, as the fears it creates abuse the minds of men. *For the fears it gives them are but general for the present, threatening a vengeance to they know not whom, and to fall they know not when; and in the issue vain as the startings of a child before the shadows of the twilight. Now as all the tinsil-miracles among the Papists most fatally wound Religion, because deriving a suspicion upon the real ones when once detected; so delusive fears introduc't upon pretences religious, discredit all the true ones; and Religion is in danger to be concluded but a kind of officious ly, a using the softness and credulity of some men to the service of a design. Religion is too chaste and sacred to be dallied with, non patitur lusum fides. Pious frauds (as strong-waters do the body) may perhaps help Religion in a fit, but, if used familiarly, disable the native heat and strength thereof. Hay and stubble laid upon a good foundation (such I account well ment forgeries*

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*ries in Religion) will catch fire and consume at last, and leave a great stain and soil upon the very foundation.*

3. As it reports Religion a Systeme of some Ethnick rites, sneaking and beggerly entertainments of the mind: Now there is *nothing more effectually perswades subtile minds to Atheism, then the evaporating of Religion in the Doctrinethereof, into a multitude of perplext questions and doubtful disputations, which make no man wiser or better; and, in the Practise, into a croud of touchy and critical modes or observations, that cannot command a reverence to themselves before discerning minds, which soon see through them, they are so thin and airy. To dismiss this second particular. If these devouter perswasions concerning Prodigies, produce not in some minds any such sower thoughts of Religion, 'tis solely owing to the power of some happier principles in conjunction with them, by whose activity their malign influence is overpower'd and corrected.*

Thirdly, It may be of Use to reprehend a very Vulgar and Pernicious Error,

1. A very vulgar Error. *I profess not to know any one Error which all Times and Persons have been so even fatally abus'd withal as the Opinion of presages by Prodigies: whereas there are some false notions which are Errors of the Persons, others which are Errors*

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rors of the Age, *holding of the peculiar temper, condition, circumstances, of the Person or Age, in which found; this seems to be, in a manner, the Error of the World; having been justifi'd by Jews, Gentiles, Christians, some Ancients, Modern, Learned, Simple, as will more fully appear in the sequel, and may in part by some few instances, which (to serve the necessities of the present Argument) I shall here insert.*

*As for the Jews, if a good Law be any indication of bad manners, we may conclude them not free of the infection of this Error. God enjoyn'd, & That there should not be found among them any that used divination,* <sup>g Deut. 18. 10,</sup>  
*or an observer of times, וירעני, which the LXX renders by παρατηρητων, a regarder of prodigies and strange accidents. And whereas we find them upon the appearance of armed troupes in the Ayr, a little before the approach of Antiochus, praying that the*  
*h Omen might be turned to good, methinks* <sup>h 2 Macc. 5. 4.</sup>  
*their breath smells strongly of the Onyons and garlick of Egypt; those traditional conceits of Omeus and Prodigies derived originally from thence, or some other neighbouring Heathens. And perhaps that forward Opinion which the Disciples, being Jews, had already conceived of Earth-quakes, the roaring of the Sea, strange sights in the air, and the like, might occasion our Saviours ap-*  

*point-*



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pointing such things as his signs of the approaching desolation of Hierusalem. It being a noted instance of his goodness, that he never goes further from the Notions, Usages, and thoughts of men in any appointments of his, then necessity obligeth.

How far the Heathen were leaven'd with this fond Notion, the very names and titles Monstra, Ostenta, Prodigia, Portenta, whereby they used to express any anomalous instances of Nature, are but too pregnant a demonstration; all of them <sup>i</sup> carrying in their Original a promise of foreshewing somewhat future. That which perhaps hath betrayed a great many to a like Opinion of them, (most people understanding little besides names and words) not considering, that <sup>k</sup> as there are things without words, so also <sup>l</sup> *ἡνεοφωνίαι*, a great many words without things to fill them out.

<sup>i</sup> Vid. p. 86.

<sup>k</sup> Quemadmodum sunt res quæ nomine carent, per in-observatorem; ita sunt & nomina, quæ carent rebus, per suppositio-nem phantastice. Verulam. Nov. Org.

<sup>l</sup> Aph. 60.

<sup>m</sup> 1 Tim. 6. 20.

<sup>n</sup> *Ἐπὶ μεγά-*

*λοις τέλει*

*ἡρώμασι,*

*ἡ μέγας με-*

*ταβολαὶς*

*ὅτι ὁ γῆς, ἀ-*

*νατέλλειν τὸ*

*ποῖόν τις ἀε-*

*εἰς σελήνον*

*τας, &c.*

In

Cels. l. 1. p. 45.

Among the Fathers (to do them right) I find none so express as <sup>m</sup> Origen, who speaking concerning Comets, tells us, it hath been observ'd, that so often as any eminent Changes happen in Earth, such stars have been known to arise; foreshewing the translation of Kingdoms, or Warrs, or whatever may happen of force sufficient for any great commotions here below.

If we look among the more Modern, it may suffice in this place to take notice that the first Occasion and Original of Rogation week (ob-

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*serv'd now upon the religion of greater principles) in the Church, is by Historians, as <sup>n</sup> we* Dr. Hammond Def. of the Liturgy sect. 53.  
*are told, refer'd to Claud. Mamertus Bishop of Vienne in France, for the averting of some judgments, which, upon the observation of many inauspicious accidents and prodigies, were sadly fear'd to be approaching.*

*Amongst the Learned, the height of* <sup>o</sup> *Gro-* o Grot. Not. in Proph. Joel. c. 2. 30.  
*tius calls my ey upon him, who thus expresseth himself in favor of Prodigies, Solent magnas rerum conversiones præcedere Cometæ, gladii ardentes, aliâque signa ejusmodi.*

*As for the common sort of people, Prodigy hath alway appear'd to them a word cloth'd about with death, and a Comet creates them more solemn thoughts then Hell doth. A matter of no great wonder, for as they are, by the simplicity of their state, apt to retain a more quick sense of those notions which follow Nature unsuborn'd by subtilty, interest, or passion (for the Notices of a God, of a future state, of the Soul's immortality, and of a Providence, as <sup>p</sup> Ælian notes, took faster hold of the popularity, the ruder Indians and Celtæ, then of some of the more discursive Philosophers among the Græcians). So withal are more impressivè to those which follow Nature tainted and deprav'd with Guilt and Ignorance, and the many Idols consequent unto both: amongst which, this notion of Prefages*

<sup>p</sup> V. Ælian. Var. Hist. l. 2. c. 31.

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*sages by Prodigies will appear in due place, to be no small one.*

*So that the Opinion I contend with may seem, like some weeds in the water, to have a very diffus'd leaf, though growing from a weak and pitiful root; (generally receiv'd, but without any solid reason to support it) and therefore so weak a hand as mine may with hope and apology attempt to pull it up. Why should the old follies of Ethnicism be prefer'd to the Opinion of Christian fore-sights? and when the Sunshine of the Gospel hath discover'd the transparency of all those thin and curious Arts, Capnomancy, Augury, Sooth-saying, Chiromancy, Divination by the Extà, why should their contemporary, Teratoscropy, survive them all? while we pretend so great an enmity to Superstition, Ethnicism, Popery, shall we ἀεὶ ἀδύνατοι, deal our blows against those airy words, but receive the observation of Prodigies with so much religious kindness, brought forth and cherish't when and where they were most ascendent; and that amidst all this light which shines from heaven about us? It was the doctrine of the Ancients, that the Ghosts assum'd an airy, and therefore dissipable, body to appear in, which was confirm'd by the cold of the night, but attenuated by the light-some heat of the day, in which therefore they could never appear: thus this frightful Mor-*

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mo, the Opinion of Prodigies, hath nothing but a condens'd body of aire (the combin'd voices of the Many) to give it consistence, and therefore though it might appear formidable in the darkness of Gentilism, methinks the Noon-day of the Gospel should baffle and banish it from the World to that darkness whence it did derive: Especially considering that it is

2. A very pernicious Error, as having a most malign influence upon the Understanding, upon Philosophy, and upon Divinity.

1. Upon the Understanding it self. No two things do so Usurp upon and Waste the faculty of Reason, as Enthusiasm and Superstition, the one binding a faith, the other a fear upon the Soul to which they vainly intitle some divine discovery: both train a man up to beleive beyond possibility of proof: both instruct the Mind to conceive (like the Mares in Pliny) merely by the wind, the vain words of some passionate men, that can but pretend a Revelation or tell a strange story: both teach a man to deliver over himself (in a kind of captivity of Understanding) to the confident dictate of the Sons of Imagination: to determine of things by measures phantastical, rules which cannot maintain themselves in credit by any sober and severe discourses: both inure the mind rather to divine then judg, to dispute from maximes rather vehement then solid: both make a man afraid to beleive himself

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self, to acknowledg that truth which overpowers his mind, and would reward its cordial entertainment with assurance and true freedom of spirit. Both place a man (if he prove so unhappy as to mistake) beyond possibility of conviction; it being in vain to press an argument against him that thinks he can confront a Revelation, a Miracle or some strange judgment from heaven upon his Adversary, to your conclusion. In sum, There is not a greater evil in the State, then wickedness established by a law; nor a greater in the Church, then error by Religion and an ignorant devotion toward God. And therefore no pains and care too much, to remove these two beams from the eye of humane understanding, which render it so insufficient for a just and faithful discovery of Objects in Religion or common Science.

2. Upon Philosophy. For when once Superstition hath prefer'd these Prodigies to the repute of Divine Messengers, it will easily be infer'd a necessary respect towards them to keep some distance, and not to approach them too nerely by too busy and curious an inquiry into their natural and immediate causes. Among the Grecians of old, those Secretaries of Nature which first made a tender of the natural causes of lightnings and tempests to the ruder Ears of men, were blasted with the reproach of Atheists, and fell under the hatred of the untutor'd

q Pessima res  
est errorum  
Apotheosis, &  
pro peste In-  
tellectus ha-  
benda est, si  
vanis accedat  
veneratio.  
Bac. Nov. Org.  
App. 65.





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the Conceit authorizes a liberty for men to bring into it what Divine signs they please without warrant from Scripture or reason; but because it conciliates reverence to a Lie, and christens the vain and soft fears of ignorance by the name of prudent foresights and religious observances of God: whence the soul is brought (like some of the ancient Heathens) to give worship to its very passions and diseases. Stories of Prodigies may perhaps serve to deceive the tedium of a winter night, but when once they advance (à focus ad Aras) from the chimney corner to the Church, and are adopted the measures of a religious faith or fear, advanced the serious motives of Repentance, 'tis time to throw contempt upon them. A ly never did, never could serve the interest of truth.

The Church of Rome (whether to serve the interest of Philosophy or Divinity, I shall not here concern my self to enquire) hath sometime exprest herself (as est & ab hoste doceri) by some of her Wiser Representatives, a great Adversary to this instance of superstition, the observation of portentous accidents. We finde in the Catalogue of books prohibited by Urban. viii. this interdicted among the rest, Author Chronici prodigiorum & ostentorum ab exordio mundi usque ad Annum 1557. And Gregory the Great (represented to Posterity as one most studious of

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of the propagation of the Christian Religion) was acted by so great a zeal against it, that we are told he took care for the extirpation of that otherwise excellent Historian, Livy, out of all Libraries, ob tam frequentem & accuratam portentorum enumerationem, for his so frequent and critical enumeration of all the Portenta which seemed to attend any great Action and Change in State. Though I think too hasty and severe a judgment past upon that Historian, whom we shall easily perceive not more leavened in mind or writing with this kind of sower Superstition, then Herodotus, Plutarch in his lives, Dio Cassius, Tacitus, and all other Ethnick Historians (Polybius only excepted) which stood in no better light then he did. However this eminent Person discovered a great zeal against the abuse of mens minds by such solemn follies as the sacred regards of Prodigies are: and a great zeal carries, in the very Nature and intention thereof, its pardon for a little over-doing. The mind of man was made for Truth and Goodness, and therefore should not in any matter (if the Remedy fell within our compass) be put off with the bare form and idol of either; but where an error hath once seiz'd it, which is (what some say of a comet) both an evil and a pregnant cause of evil, no need then of the voice of thunder to awaken charity to endeavour,

Non abhorret à Veri fide quod memoriae proditum est à nonnullis, Greg. m. Pont. religionis Christianæ propagandæ studiosissim. ū, hac tanti scriptoris ridiculâ superstitione offensum, ex omnibus Bibliothecis ejus Historias curatè tollendas. Casaub. Epist. ded. in Polyb.

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deavour, as it can, its remedy and removal.

Thirdly, This Discourse may be profitable to serve the just interest of State, *And that*

1. As it tends in weaker minds to secure the honour of Acts of State and the results of publick Counsel. Prusias being invited by Hannibal, to close with an happy advantage, then tendered, to engage the Enemy, made answer that he durst not, *Et quod Extra prohiberent*, because the Entrails of the Sacrifice did not speak it a lucky hour.

+ +

u An Tu Ca-  
runculae virtu-  
linæ mavis  
quam veteri  
Imperatori  
credere? Valer.  
Maxim. l. 3.  
c. 7. sect. 6.

To whom Hannibal, will you sooner be-  
lieve the flesh of a Calf, then an old Expe-  
rienced Commander? Certainly some men  
(though it be a weakness in them too great  
for laughter) seem to give a more easy credit  
to a phantasm in the clouds, a castle in the  
air, a Man of straw that is too wet or too com-  
pact to burn, then the reasonings of wise  
men: and to receive a Meteor, thought to fall  
upon the Parliament-House, with more awful  
regards then all that Authority, Gravity and  
wisdom that dwells in that House  
of publick Judgment. Great reason therefore  
to endeavor to disabuse their minds, and to  
shew that such Prodigies (like some terrible  
dreams) are frightful to them only because  
they are asleep, (either do not understand or do  
not well consider) and that nor Kingdoms nor

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men

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men are to be governed by Phancies but by Counsels.

As it tends to make men more manageable to the commands of Authority. How mean a regard shall the issues of the severest debates, and the commands of Authority find, if every pitiful Prodigy-monger have credit enough with the People to blast them, by telling them that heaven frowns upon the laws, and that God writes his displeasure against them in black and visible Characters when some sad accident befalls the compliers with them? Easy men will quickly be frightened from obedience by such images of straw, as the relations of Monsters, and strange sights are, unless we lead them up to them and shew them to be devoid of life and power, truth or signification. And certainly that man is strangely commanded by Religion, that heartily complies with the present Laws and Governors while he thinks some Prophecy or Prodigy encourage the sudden expectation of some strange change of affairs in the state.

Of what evil consequence the Romans at last found the observation of Signs and Omens to be, in war especially, appears from what Tully hath left recorded, viz. that howsoever they were in his time ab Urbanis retenta, retained for some reasons of State, in some repute with the Citizens, yet they

De Divin.  
lib. 2.



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were à bellicis sublata, quite banished the Camp, because they found that the ignorant multitude, like beasts, would not drive well, if any such bug-bears were suffered to lay before them: nor ever cheerfully attempt where any unlucky Omen gave them the opinion that they were not likely to succeed. Now where weak men (like the horse of Alexander) are ready to start and fly off from their Rulers, because frighted with shadows, 'tis a charity to them and the Publick to turn them to the Sun, to lead them to the light by a faithful information of their judgments.

3. As it ministers to the quiet and tranquillity of the State. That man that hath already incircled his own head with a Glory, and is strongly perswaded that God's honor and the Gospel stand or fall with his private Party and Opinion, will need no great Rhetorick to perswade him to receive a Prodigy (upon the credit of the Vulgar notion thereof) as a sign from heaven to encourage any seditious endeavours to advance it. Prophecies concerning the deaths of some great persons or alteration in State (though a kind of weak air which carries about but the more light and chaffy minds) the Wisdom of the State hath judged of such evil consequence as by several Acts of Parliament, under severe penalties, to interdict the publication

✕ Constat se-  
ditiosis hujus-  
modi ostenta  
ad res novan-  
das animos ad-  
dere, &c.  
*Cardan. de*  
*Vit. propr. t. 4.*

y See Sr Ed.  
Cook Instit. P.  
3.c. 55.

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of them. Now Prodigies have ever been proposed and received as a kind of types and real Prophecies of some black daies and strange alterations and judgments just upon the wheel of Providence and at hand: and therefore may easily be presumed to have as malign an influence upon the people (apt to be mightily moved with whatever comes toward them with any shadow and promise of Divine and Sacred) as the former.

Among the Ancient Romans, subtil Statesmen made use of that Superstitious observation of Omens and Prodigies, to which they saw the people (in the ruder ages especially) so invincibly addicted, to manage them to what persuasions might best serve the present necessities of State; to which purpose they had their Collegia Vatum, Publick Diviners, who knew to bend these Omen accidents (as the Mufti can the Alcoran) to such a sense and signification as might make the easie multitude manageable to the purposes and designs of their Rulers. And twere to be wisht that some Christians had not since transcribed the copy of this Ethnick example, and endeavoured to serve some secular ends upon the credulity and superstition of the multitude, by the tendring of any such Prodigies to their hopes or fears. But let men beware how any dark Providence tempt them to the breach of a clear Command. He that alled-

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gush barely the Spirit of God to justify his  
Opinion in Religion; may thank himself if he  
perish in the other world; and he that quotes  
only a Prodigy in Nature to encourage any  
Fetition in State: may thank himself if he per-  
ish in this.

Secondly. This Discourse (without doing much to the Authors) will be pregnant with pleasure and delight. For things rare and unusual (the subject thereof) call forth the Soul to a very quick and grateful attendance, whilst matters of greater worth and moment, of more familiar occurrence, (like things often handled and blown upon) lose their value and luster in use. Now the contemplation of things new and strange gives the Soul so high a pleasure, because they prove the occasions of wonder and admiration, which the Philosopher ranks among the *aristotela*, things pleasant and delightful, because (saith He) admiration comes attended with a tacite desire of learning more fully the nature and causes of its object: though I rather think, because Admiration is (as the Lord Verulam well styles it) *abrupta quædam scientia*, an Essay to knowledge. Besides, we shall observe that the acts of the Soul which are intense, and call it much off from it self, as profound contemplations, great joys, ecstasies, a great love, and so, high admirations, create it a most chaste and refined plea-

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pleasure. Moreover objects not as yet fully known (as objects rare and strange are) keep the Soul in a state of hope and expectation of some huge satisfaction in a greater intimacy and acquaintance with them. Now, as in this Worlds heaven, the Viatores (because improving their felicities by an active fancy) are usually more happy then the comprehensores. Again. The Soul of man affects a kind of infinity in its objects. The affections are always reaching after new pleasures, the desires are carried forth after new possessions, Phancy is perpetually entertaining the mind with new Ideas that never took pattern from the World, the Understanding is continually calling for a new Scene of contemplations, the eye is never satisfied with seeing: <sup>b</sup> Scilicet attedgeth this reason of the delight men naturally take in fables, the pictures of Anticks and Monsters, (things rare and extraordinary) even because they exceed the common limits of truth, and mend the prospect of the Soul; which by its unconfined desires and motions gives it self to understand, that it is of higher extraction then that of a beast, and cannot truly compose and enjoy it self but in union with God the infinite Ocean of Truth and Goodness.

Thirdly. That which further engaged my thoughts upon the Argument, was a consideration of the Seasonableness thereof. We have

b Mens nostra  
e fabulis &  
monstrorum  
picturis capit  
Voluptatem  
propterea quod  
exuperant vul-  
gares limites  
veritatis &c.  
aspernatur  
enim ceterorum  
finium præ-  
scriptionem.  
Exer. 307. lect.  
11.

## The Preface.

have been of late perswaded by three or four  
several impressions of Books (more than  
were ever vented in any Rahnick or Christian  
an Common-wealth in a much larger pe-  
riod of time) that England is grown Affri-  
ca, and presents us every year since the Re-  
turn of His Majesty, with a new Scene of  
Monstrous and strange sights; and all held  
forth to the people, like black clouds before a  
storm, the harbingers of some strange and un-  
usual plagues approaching in the State. And  
this by Persons (for the Prefaces speak in  
the Plural) pretending an intimacy with Scri-  
pture, Rabbers, Greek and Latin, Ancient  
and Modern Writers. An example more just  
by meriting the publick wonder than any those  
books contain, but that the Nation (like the  
womb of Rebekah) carries such striving and  
contesting Parties therein.

The Poets feign the Giants, the sons of  
Earth, to have bidden battel to the Gods,  
and to have perisht by a thunderbolt in the  
confidence of that attempt; and the Earth  
their Mother, to avenge the death of her  
Sons, to have brought forth their last Sister,  
Fame. A fable expounded by the excellent  
Verulam, of unquiet and seditious persons  
(a kind of Filii Terræ, the creatures of the  
People, usually envious against their Rulers,  
and soon weary of the present State of things)  
who when crusht and ruined in their attempts  
against



## The Preface.

against the Gods on earth, their rightful Governors; their fall is avenged by a famulae & seditiosa, (a feminine Sedition) popular clamors; libels, odious representations of them to derive upon them the common envy; with which may be numbered the reports of strange Prodigies or Prophecies giving hopes of some approaching change of affairs: (an observation which I am sure will offend none that are studious of that Sacred character, Persons which are quiet in the Land.) Psal. 35. 20.

To all that hath been hitherto discoursed concerning the profit, pleasure, Reasonableness of the Argument before us, I shall superadd this one consideration more to excuse the trouble these papers give the Reader. An hasty and ignorant rejection of things which obtain, though unworthily, the place and repute of Divine and sacred, as Prodigies do, is both a Cause of Atheism, and a Sign thereof. A Cause; for men without due information, will be forward to suspect (as we alwaies are, where we do not love) that the other parts of Religion do as much abuse the faith of the World, as that which they now see rejected; and that Religion is nothing but a more solemn kind of Custom, (like a bubble) made and broken by the same common Airs. And therefore an overhasty pulling off, even the Wens and excrescencies from the body of Reli-

## The Preface.

Religion, may prove of as evil consequence, as a permitting them still to grow upon it. A Sign too; He that without light and resolution, sights and neglects things, but presumed Sacred, is but a more fortunate Atheist, and more harmlesly prophane: As our Saviour would not be called Good in an ignorant courtesy, so neither should these Prodigies, vain, in an ignorant Scorn. Look therefore as Persons once sacred, found guilty of Capital crimes, are sometimes solemnly degraded: and all the characters of Dignity and Sanctity stamp upon them, defac't and blotted out, before they are executed. So things once preferred to the repute of Sacred, should be first degraded by a due information of mens judgments, from that Opinion and high degree of respect they obtained with them, before they be thrown off, and delivered to their just neglect and disregard.

And this is that which I thought necessary to premise to level the way to a fairer reception and interpretation of the ensuing Discourse.

THE

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T

A

# DISCOURSE

Concerning

# PRODIGES:

Wherein the Vanity of Prefages by  
them is reprehended, and their true and  
proper Ends asserted and vindicated.

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## CHAP. I.

Concerning the several kinds of Prodigies.

*Great Wonders of divine efficiency alone :  
these divided into Ordinary and Extraor-  
dinary. The kinds of the former toucht  
upon. Wonders extraordinary (comprised  
under the general name of Prodigies) di-  
vided into Signal and Penal. The use of  
that phrase excused. Prodigies Signal,  
Natural, Praternatural, Supernatural,  
what. Most of the Prodigies related in the  
Ethnick Stories, excluded this number, and  
why. A conjecture concerning the occasion  
of some of them. Prodigies Penal described.*

**I**T is the Prerogative Royal of the King  
of Heaven, that He *onely doeth great won-* Pla. 136. 4.  
*ders,* commands Nature to what actions, in-

*Of the several kinds of Prodigies.*

to what posture, may best serve the ends of his own honor and wisdom. The biggest works the Devil doeth, have but a tympany of greatness; are a kind of practical fallacies; as he is but *Simia Dei*, so the greatest work which falls within his compass, is but *Simia Miraculi*, and owes the wonder it meets with, not to its own real greatness, but our Ignorance.

Now these wonders are either *Ordinary* or *Extraordinary*.

First, There are some of his wonders of *Ordinary and constant residence* (a kind of more remarkable passages in the Book of Nature) such as are,

1. *The Maradica Natura*, By which I take leave to understand at present, those works in Nature which are of so private and peculiar a make and character, that they stand almost alone, and hardly admit their pattern in the whole Systeme of the Creation; such as are *boiling Springs, flaming Mountains, petrifying Waters, vast chasms and hiatus in the Earth, &c.* the instances whereof are so various, that there is no Country but hath its *miranda*, which call upon it to pay the constant tribute of a deliberate and judicious admiration to him, who seems to inscribe his own name *Wonderful* upon all these works of his.

2. *The Lusus Natura*, (as I may stile them)

them) the disports of Nature; such works wherein the hand of Nature breaks and divides, as it were, the plain ground of some common nature into an elegant variety of Individuals, different in shape and temper; as is seen in Dogs and Roses, &c. as also those works wherein (because delighted as much with consent as variety) *se sequiturque fugitque*, she seems to follow and fly from her self both at once, aping and imitating her own works, in one element, by some similar figures or dispositions; in different pieces of the Creation, in another: (which serve as a kind of grateful repeats in the harmony of the world.)

3. The *Varietates Naturæ*, elegant and copious varieties of Nature, appearing in the various *species* of things; which different Countries so entertain the curiosities of each other with, that one appears a kind of constant Prodigy to another. All these have employed the hours of other men, and besides are more properly entred among the rarities than the Prodigies of Nature, and so fall not within the lines of our present Argument,

Secondly, There are *Wonders Extraordinary*, such are they which happen but now and then, and are a kind of short and transient discords, stepping in sometimes to recommend the general harmony and evenness

*Of the several kinds of Prodigies.*

in the motions of Nature, and the Government of the World, comprised under the general name of *Prodigies*.

Now that division of these, which I shall premise to the ensuing discourse, shall be such as the necessity and design thereof, rather than such as the laws of Logick, do prompt me to; which I conceive may be best serv'd, by dividing them into *Prodigies* (barely) *Signal* and *Penal*: for though I have no faith nor favor for the former, yet while I indite them at the bar of Reason, I am forc'd to take notice of them under such names and titles, as common opinion hath affix'd upon them.

Those which are (barely) *Signal* (such, I mean, in vulgar account) are of three sorts:

1. *Prodigies Natural*, such I reckon all those of whose particular and immediate causes (though rarely occurring) we are sufficiently resolv'd: such as are, to speak with the people, *falling Stars*, *Earthquakes*, *Extraordinary Eclipses*, *the appearance of two or three Suns at once*, *some kind of monstrous births*. With these I number all Events, beside the common road of Nature, owing to some accidental, though to us unknown, assistance or interruption of Agents purely natural, or some secret and reserved Law in Nature: as *Comets*, *New Stars*, some extraordinary alteration in the heavenly Bodies, [as  
that



that in the Planet *Venus*; both as to color and figure, before the times of Christ, often mention'd by Astronomers from *Varro* and *S. Augustin*; and the strange *deliquium* of Light in the Sun about the death of *Cæsar*, } some irregular ebbings and flowings of the Sea. These I reckon Prodigies Natural, all being but Natures acting of its part in different habits and appearances, and giving us to know how it will exert it self when such Actives and Passives chance to meet; and that it intends, the more private and common Laws of Motion appointed to some particular & inferior Agents, shall obtain and bind, except where some more catholick and indispensable Laws of operation given to Causes of greater force and value shall chance to interpose and suspend them for a time; as the Statutes and Customs of private Corporations take place, till their power be suspended by some more catholick and enforcing Law of State.

8. August. de Civ. Dei, l. 21. c. 8.

2. Prodigies *Præternatural*, such I account all strange Events, which hold of no steady causes, but are to us soly casual and uncertain: as the firing of houses or temples by Lightning, the coming to shoar of some strange kind of fish, Spots as of blood appearing upon Stones or Statues, Messages deliver'd by Spirits, strange Voices in the night, apparitions of Ghosts, fearful sights in the Air, as of Armies, and instruments of War; in short,

*Of the several kinds of Prodigies.*

*all the odd accidents anciently distinguish'd by the name of Omens. All or most of these being effects without a constant and Natural, and yet not requiring the special presence and power of a Supernatural, cause.*

3. *Supernatural.* Under which head I comprize all those Miracles which ignorance of causes is the maker of, as also all those Events of which Reason is sufficiently resolv'd that they exceed the powers and sufficiencies of all Natural Causes. For as in Religion there are some things according to the reason of all men; viz. the doctrines of temperance, righteousness, and judgement to come, &c. some things beside Reason; those divine discoveries in Scripture, which Reason readily apprehends and seals unto, as just and true, which it could not by its own powers rise up to the knowledg of, such are all the historical reports, and the wise methods of Salvation, contained therein. Other things above Reason; the great Articles of Faith, transcendent to the Capacity as well as light of common reason, in the modes and circumstances of them. So in the compass of divine providence, there are three sorts of works; Some, according to Nature, and the more common laws and rules of operation given to it. Some, beside common Nature, such are the Events we call Prodigies, which though according to nature, as considered

considered in such circumstances and coincidence of causes, yet are beside it, if considered soly with regard to its more usual and familiar methods of action. Other things *above* Nature, such are the alterations therein which exceed the capacities of second causes. In a Prodigy strictly taken, Nature suffers from it self, and is in a sort both Victor and Captive to it self; but in a Miracle, Nature is soly passive to that Original Mind and Power, who first gave, and who alone can suspend, its original Laws of Motion.

These Supernatural Prodigies (though I know not to believe any such now hapning) must find a place in this discourse, not onely because some such have, as Embassadors extraordinary, been dispatch'd heretofore upon some great errand, [as the fearful Eclipse at our Saviors death, the Hailstones mentioned *Josb. 10. 11.* so hugely exceeding the common standard of Nature, and perhaps the fiery Sword which hung over *Jerusalem* so long, before its final desolation:] but because our Adversaries are so prone to over-value occurrences, and to intitle an immediate hand of Heaven to all objects of wonder.

As for those stories, with which the Ethnick Legends abound, of the *speaking of Children out of their Mothers wombs, the raining of Stones, the speaking of Oxen, their*

## Of the several kinds of Prodigies.

being found without hearts or livers when brought to the Altars, Fountains running red blood for a long time together, the bloody sweats of Armor, (which may seem to enter a fair plea for the honor of being marshal'd under this head) I am greatly inclinable, with *Tul. De Divin. l. 2.* ly, to reject them all as fables and impostures, with which the World hath ever been abused; (*Rome Pagan* was as good at inventing stories of Prodigies, and Apparitions of the Gods, as *Rome Christian* of Miracles and Apparitions of Saints.) Except, to save the credit of Historians, we believe that the Devil, while the noise of Miracles was so loud in the World, might with these and the like antick and lying Wonders, ape the true Miracles of God, whose worship and attributes he had usurp'd; so to maintain his reputation with his befool'd Votaries. With a like faith, though better affection, (because found in a Poem) I receive many of those *Portenta* which *Virgil* tells us attended the fall of *Cæsar*.

——— *Simulachra miris pallentia modis  
Visa sub obscurum noctis, pecudesque locuta,  
Infandum, sistunt amnes, terraque dehiscunt,  
Et mæstū illacrymat templis ebur, æraq; sudat.  
Nec puteis manare cruor cessavit.* ———

*Virgil. Georg.  
l. 1.*

'Twas proper for a Poet to hang the whole frame of Nature, as it were with mourning and

and astonishment, upon the fall of so great a Person as *Cæsar* was. Gods Miracles carried majesty in those visible characters of Power, Greatness, Wisdom, stamp'd upon them; (they were never vain and ludicrous) and they came forth upon some errand of importance: like a broad Seal they carried Majesty in their aspect, and came to derive credit and authority upon some matter of great weight and moment.

Secondly, There are a sort of *Penal Prodigies* (for I take the word in the latitude of its fence) such as are judgments upon Persons or Nations of a dreadful and unusual figure and condition: *sudden arrests by death, strange diseases, death by lightning, on the fall of a tower, unusual plagues, defeats of Armies at huge odds and disadvantages, murrain of cattle, very unseasonable years, &c.*

These distinctions premised, I shall offer the best service I can, toward the desiphering of these dark characters of divine Providence; and make inquiry (in the order they now lie before us) into the intent and meaning of these new and unwonted occurrences. In which Essay, I shall assume the liberty which I readily allow another of advising freely with Reason; for we cannot in this Argument take to any other Oracle to resolve us, if we intend to be wise to sobriety. It is but a just valuation of our selves, to let



no vulgar notions commence our persuasions, before they have past the scrutiny of our Reason, and appear to merit our assent.

## CHAP. II.

### Concerning Prodigies, Signal, Natural.

I Shall descend now to a close and distinct discourse concerning the forementioned Prodigies *Signal*; and amongst them; first concerning those which more immediately resolve into causes *Natural*. Concerning all which, I offer this general *Thesis* to proof: *Prodigies Natural* are not intended; nor to be expounded the *Prognosticks* of judgments, suddenly to ensue upon whole Nations or particular persons. It is especially ignorance of their causes and ends which hath preferred some of these Natural Prodigies to so great a veneration and regard in many mens minds. As Ethnicism of old made the gods it worship'd, so Ignorance oft makes the *Furies* it dreads.

Mat. 44. 15.

This *Thesis* I shall endeavor to perswade,  
1. By some general Reasons and Arguments.

2. By a particular Induction and Survey of such as seem most plausibly pretended the  
silent

silent Monitors of some approaching vengeance.

First, By some general Reasons.

## SECT. I.

*Reasons to prove Prodigies Natural no Signs of a future judgment.*

The first Argument taken from their doubtful and uncertain indications. That proved from the confessions of their ablest Expositors. Cornel. Gemma the first and only undertaker to teach the Art of interpreting them: his attempt fruitless: further proved from their different Expositions in all times. The Eschick vanity in putting contrary constructions upon them at several times, noted: different conjectures of Papists and Protestants upon the finding of the heart of Zwingle's image when his body was burnt: the sober speech of Thuanus upon that occasion. Molineus, while contending for Prodigies, acknowledgeth as much. The Interpreters of them banished the Jewish commonwealth of old, upon this account. Philo. All Gods signs express; the vanity of those which are not. Nothing in a Prodigy to direct its interpretation.

2. From a consideration of the times when first attended to. Great regard to be had to the times when any Laws or usages first commenc'd, with the reason thereof, noted from King James. The times when Prodigies were first and most attended to, noted especially for gross ignorance in matters of Religion and Philosophy. The custom of the Egyptians to keep Registers of Prodigies, with the reason thereof. Imitated by the Romans. Four observations upon the remaining Registers, as restored by Lycosthenes. Prodigies most regarded in times of distraction and motion, noted from Livy and Seneca, with the reason thereof. Gods institutions opposit to the Devils.

3. The Thesis further proved from a consideration of the Natural, and necessary causes of such things. More of Nature observable in a Prodigy then common Occurrences: that cleared in several instances.

4. From

4. From the nature and temper of the Oeconomy we are now under: Things managed in it, in gentle, rational, and silent manners. A conjecture upon the Wonders at our Saviors death, and at Pentecost. What kind of Reasons to be expected in this Argument, and others of like nature.

Argum. I.

**T**He Argument which I shall first offer to reprehend the common vanity of receiving them as a kind of indications in Bodies Politick, is this: Their (pretended) indications, are so hugely perplex'd, doubtful and uncertain, that it cannot be concluded what judgment they portend, or when to ensue, or whether private persons or whole Nations be alarm'd by them.

If God do write *Fata hominum* in these mystick characters, there is none on earth found able to read the writing, and (with any certainty) to make known the interpretation thereof. Most of their Expositors (like those upon Aristotle) are rather *Vates quam Interpretes*. Concerning that prodigious Comet which shone in our Hemisphere, Ann. 1618. \* one that pretended himself as much an intimate with the Stars as other men, yet thus freely delivers himself; *Deum immortalem! quanto ille plures de sese ferme Opiniones quam crines sparsit*. To a like purpose Tycho Brahe (discourfing de Nova stella Cygni, Ann. 1600.) *Decreta Phænomenoy cælitus illucescentium, ab iis qui artem astrologicam profitentur, prasagiri, sat evidenti experimento,*

\* Nuncius  
Prophet. &c.

perimento, nequeunt: but yet (so hard it is even for wise men to discard their *συγγενεῖς τε καὶ συντεταγμένα δόγματα*, as *Origen* calls them, Opinions brought up with them, and woven into the very first contexture of their minds;) he adds, *Non idcirco statuum Deum & Naturam talibus noviter formatis corporibus inaniter illudere, nihilque presagii mundo ostendere*: as if they must needs be in vain, unless they assist presages (which yet no man is able to reach the certain knowledg of.) I question not, but amidst the many Contenders for the sacred regards of the singularities in Nature, there would not have wanted some to direct the interpretation of them by some steady rules and maxims, had not a secret conviction of the vanity and giddiness of the attempt, shamed and discouraged it. But I never had the hap to meet with above one of courage enough to pretend to teach the World the art of expounding such prodigious Events: And he (speaking concerning them) confidently tells his Reader, *Nos horum notitiam qualemcunque ad usum vita ac felicitatis humanae referentes, apto titulo artem, quam pra-* *κοσμοχ. sive de Divin. Nat. Characterism. l. 1. c. 1.*  
*am, κοσμοχ. επιτιμω nuncupamus: eo quod crises atque mutationes ingentes in humana Republ. quam reliquis universi partibus doceat praesagire.* And lest the honor of the Undertaking should not fall intire upon his own

own head, he adds, That many have written of Monsters, strange sights, Prodigies of all sorts; *Opus vero quo communissima quadam ex rebus divinis, presagiendi ratio tradetur, a nemine haecenus exaratum est*; A work in which the common art and way of presaging by these divine Works and Signs, might be laid forth, is as yet unattempted by any man. I shall not wrong him or other men so far as to deny him the first Undertaker in this work: that he was no more, will, I easily perswade my self, appear to the capable peruser of his writings: Nor was it possible for him to build up this pretended Art, wanting the even rule and line of assured principles of Reason or uniform experience to lay out the Maxims and conclusions of it by.

A truth which the different purposes and significations to which these Prodigies have been (in all times) expounded, make faith of. In the more ancient times of the world, when they had their *Collegia vatum*, publick Professors of the Art of Divination, by any unusual *Phaenomena* in Nature, we shall observe *Earthquakes, Comets, Lightnings, &c.* expounded sometimes *lata*, sometimes *sinistra Omina*: All these images (like some among the Papists) were made to look upon the people with a frown or a smile, according as

*Quis non rideret amentiam, insulsi-  
tem, & imper-  
spicientiam  
veterum, ut  
unus terrae-  
motus, unum  
fulmen, unum  
caeleste signum, rem secundam;  
alter terrae-motus, alterum fulmen, alterum  
signum, rem adversam porrederet?* Polyd. Virg. de Pradig. l. 3.



the Priests of old (for State-reasons) were pleased to manage them by their subtle interpretations. Thus, in latter times, they have always (like bells) sounded to such a tune and sence, as the passengers phancy would impose upon them: That *pluvia purpurea*, purpled rain falling at *Bruxels*, Ann. 1646. (concerning the reason of which there are extant the several judgments of Learned men) was no doubt received by timorous and foster phancies, as a presage of a bloody war suddenly to ensue; whereas others owned it as an *Omen* of a pacifick covenant, and a Sign that Heaven would sooner rain blood, then there should be any further effusion thereof on Earth or Sea, as the Poet expresseth himself upon that occasion;

*Fam satis effusum terraq; mariq; cruoris,  
Ipsa testantur queis pluit axis aqua.*

Thus when the heart of *Zuinglius* (who was burnt, being found among the slain) was found intire in the ashes, when his body was consumed, his friends, from this *Ordeel* trial, concluded the stoutness and sincerity, but his adversaries the obdurateness thereof. But the grave Historian makes a more sober gloss upon this providence, then either, in those words, *Adeo turbatis odio aut amore animis, ut sit religionis dissentionibus, pro se quisque omnia superstitiose interpretatur.* Mens minds disturbed with love or hatred (as it falls out

in

Thuan. Obit.  
doct. vir. Anna  
1531.

Molin. Var.  
l. 2. c. 7.

in religious differences) each party superstitiously interprets all accidents in favor of it self. And *Molineus* (while contending for a regard of Comets, and other occasions of wonder, as a kind of Signs from Heaven) with greater faithfulness to the truth then his own Opinion, confesseth as much; *Veruntamen hac signa homines solent varie interpretari, & trahere ad sua vota, aut spes, aut metus.*

In the interim we may safely infer the vanity of trusting too much to these Prodigies, which (like mercenary soldiers) may be easily brought to fight on either side in any

Στοχασαί γὰρ  
πάντες ἔτοι  
πρᾶνδον καὶ εἰ-  
κότων ἄλλοτε  
ἄλλας ἀπὸ τῆ  
αὐτῆς φαντα-  
σίας, λαμβά-  
νοντες, διὰ τὸ  
μὴτε τὰ ὑπο-  
κείμενα φύσιν  
ἔχειν πάριον,  
μὴτε τῇ δια-  
νοίας ἀκρίβειᾳ  
βάσανον περὶ  
παιδείας ἢ βα-  
σανίδι σέξαι  
τὰ θεῶν.  
l. de Monarc.  
1 Cor. 14. 8.

case. Accordingly *Philo* tells us, that the Law of *Moses* banish'd from the Jewish Nation πάντας οἰωνοσκοπούς, περὶ σκοπούς, all the observers of Birds, and regards of Prodigies, because these Diviners were led but by specious and plausible conjectures, entertained different phancies of the same things, both because their subjects had no steady and fix'd Nature, and themselves were unprovided of any sure Maxims, by which to measure and prove the conceits of their own minds in reference to them.

Can it now be reasonably imagined, that God (all whose ways are judgment) ever intended these portentous occurrences as his trumpets to alarm a drowzy world, which give forth ἀδηλον φωνῶν, so obscure and un-  
certain

certain a sound? Can it possibly be presumed, that any thing is there signified where nothing ever was or will be certainly understood? If these be the signs of the gods (said *Tully*, discoursing upon this argument)

why have they always been so dark and obscure? for if they come forth that we might understand things future, they ought to declare them more openly and plainly; *aut ne occulte quidem, si ea sciri nolebant*, or not so much as darkly, if they would not have them understood. Did God ever in all the Scripture, foretel an evil by any such winding and squint-ey'd Oracles as the Old Serpent made use of, which used to work men to some confused and pannick fears, or to insnare them, while seeming to warn them?

When he spake to *Egypt* by רבֵּרֵי אֲחֻתָּי the words of his signs, *Psalm* 105. 27. they were such as were clearly expressive of his mind and purpose, they were such as (like Arrows shot into a Town with letters bound about them) did bear upon them their own signification, and gave very intelligible intimations of their end and intention; whereas all these signs, as commonly reputed, give forth no certain notices of the Events they point unto: For they are not Hieroglyphicks of the judgments (as bearing no likeness and resemblance of them) nor effective causes of them, nor succeeded alway by them; nor

*Tul. de Divini*  
l. 2.

*Quæ est ista  
(uti creditur)  
a Diis profecta  
significatio, &  
quasi denunciatio  
calamitatum?  
quæ videntur  
Dii Immortales  
& primum ea  
significantes  
quæ sine interpretibus  
non possumus  
intelligere,  
deinde ea quæ  
cavere nequeamus?* *Idem.*

yet did Scripture (a consideration in stead of all arguments) ever warrant us to receive any of them with those religious and awful regards which are owing to the Monitors of the Divine displeasure, which certainly it would have done, had the honor of God and the good of men been so hugely concerned in them, as some would have us to imagine.

Argum. 2.

Secondly, *The times wherein these Prodigies have been received with their first and most religious regards, were such as sufficiently lessen their repute with all persons that use not to trust their faith without some security.* Excellent that speech of K. James ;

*In omni consuetudine vel exemplo, tempora spectanda sunt quando primum res capta: in quibus si vel confusio regnaverit vel inscitia, derogat illud imprimis auctoritati rerum, atque omnia reddit suspecta. Cited by L. Bacon. Aug. Sci. ent. l. 2. præfat.*

A good *Crisis* of a President or Custom may be made by an attendance to the condition of the times wherein they first obtained, which if remarkable, either for their ignorance or confusions, they greatly render the things to suspicion and challenge, which received their first birth and original in them. Now then, if, as the Astrologers use, we calculate the Nativity of this Opinion of Prodigies, we shall find nothing promised and signified of force enough to oblige our affections, because (as truth obtains most in times of greatest knowledg and peace, when men have most ability and leisure to judg, so) the times wherein this first and principally prevailed, stand blemish'd with these two great evils, *Ignorance and Distraction.*

First,

First, They were times of greatest ignorance both in matters of Religion and Learning.

In matters of Religion: Who more critically observant of all such unusual accidents, then the *Heathen who knew not God*? whose whole Religion, in the practice of it, was but a Systeme of ridiculous, obscene, and inhumane Rites; and, in the speculation thereof, but an endless observation of *Omens*, and Prodigies, and a pretended skill of interpreting dreams and strange accidents. It was among the *Egyptians* (as we learn from *Strabo*) a great instance of Religion, ἀναφύκειν εἰς τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα, to enter into their sacred Records all the *Errata Naturæ*; and, perhaps in an imitation of them, the *Romans* kept their annual Registers of the several anomalous Occurrences in the World; some fragments of which have reach'd our own times: Upon a deliberate perusal whereof, four things (not unserviceable to our general Discourse) offer themselves to our observation:

*Ful. Obsequi.  
de Oſtens.*

1. That the Events succeeding them were as often happy, as unfortunate: the truth whereof the curious Reader may soon resolve himself of by a short survey.

2. That they generally concluded in superstition; the people being readily wrought on to institute *novas Ferias*, to consecrate



Vide Liv.  
Hist. l. 22. 1.  
& 32. 1.

new Temples to the gods, to institute new Rites, *expiare prodigia*, & *procurare monstra* (as their phrase was) to divert the unlucky Omen.

3. That there hardly passeth a year or two in that Register, wherein there are not recorded several of these *Portenta*.

4. That a vain opinion of these things held the people under a perpetual Pedagogy to base and ignoble fears of God, and independent evils.

Upon which accounts, I do more then incline to believe, That the Devil (who hath the *posse aeris* at his command) did often, by divine permission, procure many strange impressions on Nature, thereby to fright those to his altars, which he could never perswade, and to subdue the minds of men to, his own image, a perpetual fear and trembling before the sense of a Deity. But God (who useth to make the Devils mines to fall in upon himself) made no doubt this happy use of these slavish fears in the minds of the *Gentiles*, even the ushering in of the Gospel Jubilee with the greater acceptance among them; as, by the fears and terrors of the Law, he also levelled the way to its more ready and chearful reception among the *Jews*. But to return,

As ignorant were the times in *Philosophy*, as Religion; perfect strangers to the Rea-

sons

sons of things: For (as it is well observed) as the knowledge of the natural causes of Earthquakes, Eclipses, Lightnings, Meteors, &c. obtained, amongst the *Gentiles* of old; so all their ominous fears, their *libri fulgurales*, interpretations of Prodigies, fell into contempt and dis-repute: The more men advanc'd into the Light, the less apt were they to start. They then began to smile at their former superstitions, as men in the day laugh at those dreams and visions which frightened them in the night.

Besides, secondly, they were *Times* of publick fears, troubles, confusions (generally) when men were most impress'd to a fear of these prodigious accidents. Thus *Livy* notes, *Turbido aliquo tempore, versis in Religionem animis, multa visa creditaq; prodigia quae non erant*: And elsewhere tells us, (*Hist. l. 28.*) *In civitate, tanto discrimine belli sollicita, quum omnium secundorum adversorumque causas in Deos verterent, multa prodigia nunciabantur.*

Men, when they think God displeased, (as they deal by a man they conceive their adversary) look upon all his actions through the black medium of suspicion and jealousy, and therefore they all seem to carry terrors and affrightments with them. All strange Accidents, like strange Passengers, in times of discomposure are suspected and examined,

*Attamen haec in bello plura & majora videntur, eadem enim non animadvertuntur in pace: accedit illud etiam, quod in metu cum creduntur facilius, rumfinguntur impunius. Cicer. speaking de Ostent. & Prodig. l. 2. de Divin. Nusquam plura exemplavaticinantium invenies, quam ubi formido mentes religione mixta percussit. Sen. Quæst. Nat. l. 6. c. 29.*

which freely pass without our notices when peace and love spread their gentle wings over a Nation: When fear hath once tinctured the eye of the mind with black (dreadful) apprehensions, it easily sees every thing of its own color; it either finds its object, or creates it in every occurrence: The Sun shines not upon the water or a cloud, but (like the *Moabites*) men conclude signs of blood from the redness of the color, when fear hath once softened the spirits, and disabled the mind for a cool and sedate judgment and valuation of things. Besides, in such times, Religion knows not to keep its mean, but quickly runs over into superstition, a servile flattery of God, and an observance of him in little, weak, feminine instances of devotion.

Now the Religion of Prodigies being conceived thus in the womb of gross ignorance, and nourish'd by the soft and easie fears of men in affliction, when their fancy, like metal in the fire, refuseth no figure, we cannot entertain any great Opinion of its strength and goodness, without a forfeiture of our credit, with more considerate and serious persons. Can it be ever thought that God should advance an observation of these things into so necessary a part of our Religion, adopt it a great instance of our regards of his superintendence and presidency over the

1 King. 3.  
22, 23.

the affairs of the World, when (we see) the Devil made choice of it to entertain the devouter fears of his Votaries withal? Did God ever take sacrifice from the Devils altars? The Devil indeed hath alway been Gods Ape, but God will alway be found the Devils Opposite, and to tread counter to him perpetually. Many of the critical Rites and Usages appointed the *Jewish Nation*, will be found to resolve into the divine purpose to cross and thwart, by his commands, the Rites of the *Zabii*, the *Egyptians*, and other neighboring Nations, which had the Devil for the Great Master of their religious Ceremonies. When our Savior came into the World, the Religion of the greatest part of it, through the Agency of the Devil, ran out into a multitude of little rites, weak observances, bodily postures; and he appoints a Religion directly opposite, plain, simple, rational, life and spirit; whose main design was to imploy and perfect the mind and spirit of a man. And can it be thought that Heaven and Hell now touch each other so far, that we must borrow the measures of our biggest fears and hopes, and motives to Repentance, from the *Ethnick Divinity*? (in which if there had been any thing sound and valuable, to be sure the Devil would have hindred its gaining so great a regard as it did among his Votaries.) Must

we now look for such a Jewel, as the intimations of the counsels of infinite Wisdom are, in the dunghil of obscene and monstrous Births, Apparitions of lying Spirits, strange Voices in the Air, mighty Winds, alterations in the face of Heaven, &c. from which the *Gentiles* in the *times of their ignorance* (to benighted men rotten wood shines) thought to receive the light of some heavenly counsel and direction:

*Argum. 3.*

*Ignorat Naturæ potentiam, qui illi non putat aliquando licere, nisi quod scæpius facit.*  
Sen.

Thirdly, *Prodigies Natural* are not to be regarded as Prognosticks of Events arbitrary, *even because they are Natural*, are owing to as necessary causes in Nature as the more common and easie productions thereof: no need to call in the extraordinary assistances of Heaven to salve these unusual *Phænomena*; for as Nature is but a constant and durable Prodigy, so a Prodigy but a more rare and unusual Nature; as hath been shewn by many Writers, to which I remit the capable Reader.

Nay, upon a due judgment of things, there will perhaps appear more of *Nature* in a Prodigy, then in the more harmonious consort of Uniform Agents, to which common usage hath appropriated that name. That Nature, in its production of the several kinds of creatures, should (as if they were all stamp'd with one common seal) give them forth in such equal and similar figures



figures and proportions, is a more just object of wonder, then to see the natural *Archeus* sometimes to play the bungler, and to leave its work (in some parts thereof) rude and mis-shapen. That the Earth should generally be delivered of the many vapors and winds within its bowels, without the pangs and throes of an Earthquake; and that all the *host of Heaven* should march every one on his way, and not to break their ranks, neither thrust one another, but walk every one on his path (to borrow the language of the Prophet) are Prodigies beyond an Earthquake, New-star, or Monster sometime discovered to the World; and therefore more justly chosen to be the constant instances of the divine Wisdom and Power: and to see some strange fires, breaking forth sometimes from the caverns of the Earth, is so much beneath wonder, that *Pliny* tells us, It exceeds all wonder, that there should be any day where- in all the things in the World, so pregnant with fiery principles, do not break forth into one mighty flame, and lay the World in ashes. The fall of some prodigious showers upon the Earth, upon a due judgment of things, will appear very Natural, and accountable to our thoughts; whereas the binding of the Waters above, that they distil in such soft and gentle Rains as usually, toucheth so near upon a Miracle, that the

Joel 2. 7, 8.

*Excedit pro-  
fecto omnia  
miracula, ul-  
lum diem fu-  
isse in quo non  
cuncta consti-  
grarent. Plin.  
Hist. Nat. l. 2.  
c. 107. & l. 31.  
c. 19.*

Job 26. 2.

same

same *Pliny* breaks out, *Quid esse mirabilium potest aquis in cælo stantibus?*

Jer. 20. 3.

Deut. 28. 66.

Isai. 44. 9.

Now then, what sober Reason can warrant us to conclude any necessary and natural occurrences the prophetick signs of Events (to us) purely arbitrary and contingent? Either all such irregular accidents shall be allow'd presages of future judgments, and then every Nation will become a *Magor Missabib*, and (what was threatned upon the *Fews*) *our lives shall alway hang in doubt before us, we shall then fear night and day, and have no assurance* (at least, no comfort) *of our lives*; or else some onely of these Prodigious Events shall be so acknowledg'd: But then, at whose feet must we sit to learn which are only the Interpreters of the power of Nature, and which are *Διὸς ἄγγελοι*, Gods Messengers to proclaim to a Nation that the *days of its visitation* are approaching? Certainly signs of judgments extraordinary must themselves be such, they must (as the Prophet speaks in another case) *be their own witnesses*, and, like Heralds which proclaim a War, bear upon them if possible that badg and cognizance whereby their office may be known, all may understand to what end and purpose they come forth from God. We find in Scripture, that Gods real signs were generally great and mighty, transcendent to the powers and possibilities of  
Natural

§. 1. *Of Natural Prodigies.*

Natural Agents, that it might appear his power was greatly concern'd in them, and that they came forth upon a greater purpose than the bare service of the laws of Nature, and the powers of some second Causes.

Fourthly, *The condition and temper of the* Argum. 4.  
*Oeconomy we are now under admits not our expectation of any Signs from Heaven, either* Exod. 7. 3, 4.  
*to witness against the practices or opinions of* 1 King. 18.  
*any party of men, or to give notice of an ap-* 24.  
*proaching mercy or judgment, [to all which* 2 King. 20. 9.  
*purposes they ministred heretofore.]* Luk. 21. 25.

God was pleas'd heretofore, suitable to the non-age of the Church, to address himself very much to the lower faculties of the Soul, phancy and imagination; accordingly we find Prophecies delivered in vehement and pompous schemes of speech, such as are apt greatly to strike and affect the imagination: Christ was promised (as one speaks) *sub magnificis & admirationem facientibus ideis*: the mysteries of the Gospel were held forth in most splendid types and symbols: the Law of God forc'd upon the spirits of men heretofore by the terrors of a thundering Heaven and a *burning Mountain*, Heb. 12. 8. and a speedy vengeance threatned upon the despisers thereof: the spirits of good men were carried out to actions and tempers beyond their natural capacities, by the pregnant and vigorous impresses of the divine Spirit: the fears

Pfal. 74. 9.

fears of the Church excited, and her faith assisted by *mighty signs* and wonders; (the withdrawing whereof the Church bewails, they all vanishing as the light of divine Revelation, prevail'd, as Stars do upon the approaches of day-light.)

Isai. 42. 2.

Ecclef. 9. 17.

But they which talk of and look for any such vehement expressions of Divinity now, mistake the temper and condition of that Oeconomy which the appearance of our Savior hath put us under; wherein all things are to be managed in a more sedate, cool, and silent maner, in a way suited to, and expressive of the temper our Savior discover'd in the world, *Who caus'd not his voice to be heard in the streets*; and to the condition of a Reasonable Being made apt to be managed by steady and calm arguments, and *the words of Wisdom heard in quiet*, in a smooth and serene temper. The mysteries of the Gospel come forth clothed in sedate and intelligible forms of speech: the minds of men are not now drawn into ecstasie by any such vehement and great examples of Divine Power and Justice as attended the lower and more servile state of the World. The Miracles our Savior wrought were of a calm and gentle nature [curing the blind, restoring the sick and lame; not causing of thunder and storms, as *Samuel*, but appeasing them] none of them such as the *Jews* called for,

for, σημεῖα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, signs from Heaven, such prodigious and affrighting thunders and fires which attended the delivery of the Law and the spirit of *Elijah*. Indeed the *Vail of the Temple was rent*, the Sun dreadfully eclipsed, the Earth terribly shaken at his death; but these astonishing Wonders were made use of as his last reserve to conquer the prejudices of an obdurate people, upon whom his more gentle and obliging instances of Divine Majesty made no impression: and perhaps these prodigious changes in Nature were intended as prophetic emblems of the great change shortly to ensue in Heaven [the way of Worship and Religion] and Earth [the Powers and Kingdoms of the World] by the Power and Doctrine of that Person who then died upon the Cross. Mat. 16. 1. Heb. 12. 26, 27.

That *mighty rushing Wind* at Pentecost, which was issued in a soft and lambent fire upon the heads of the first Preachers of the Gospel, was possibly a figure of that more vehement and terrible State of the Law, which usher'd the way for, and determined in the more sedate and gentle Dispensation of the Gospel. God hath now, in a great measure, left frightening of men to Heaven by visible terrors: The Law of the *Messias* was delivered upon the Mount in the small and still voice, and is set home upon the hearts of



Mat. 23. 14.

of men by the terror onely of a *μεγαλόν τιπον νέμειν*, a more heavy vengeance in another World, then what overtook the despisers of *Moses* Law: God expects now that we should be judiciously religious, and acted to his service by a *spirit of love and of a sound mind*, to fear his threatnings more then the burnings of *Sinai*; to look upon a bad man (since the appearance of Christ to take away sin) as the greatest Prodigy; and to expect the signs of an approaching judgment, not in the Errors of Nature, but of the Age.

Thus have I endeavored the proof of the *Thesis* proposed, by some general Reasons and Arguments: Others there are of as great moment, which (that I overlay not the Readers patience) shall be reserved as so many nerves and sinews to run through, and hold together the main body of the ensuing Discourse. All which, that they may not be thought too little for their end, I must, by the way, mind the Reader, that in matters of a moral nature (as the just value of Prodigies is) Arguments, which appear before the mind in an high degree of probability, are sufficient rules of faith and practice. In all matters we are to consider, not what Arguments we would require, but what the subject will bear. For neither Religion nor Reason require men to believe more strongly then

then the premisses conclude, or to look for premisses of greater strength then the condition of the subject will admit. Too great a facility and remissness in taking up in slight and insufficient proofs *in some*, and too great a rigor and severity in exacting them beyond the capacity of the matter *in others*, have been of equal prejudice to truth. It is therefore a justice the Reader owes the Argument and himself, not to expect clear demonstration but *high probabilities* therein; a title, which I am not without some hope that the Reasons already, or hereafter alledged, may deserve.

## SECT. II.

*Some particular Prodigies proved no signs of ensuing Evils.*

Comets commonly thought presages of Evils, and why. A difference between Comets and some luminous Bodies in the Heavens like them. A great occasion of mistake in the Doctrine of Comets, noted. Proved not to be Signs operative of any Evils in Earth. The difficulty of determining the specifick nature of a Comet: Proved no incens'd exhalation by four considerations: further evinc'd no effective cause of Evil, from the dimension and the acknowledged altitude thereof. Three Arguments to prove them not to be Signs indicative of any Evils. The difficulty of reprehending any Error which bottoms in phancy and imagination. The Omission of a particular discourse concerning some other Prodigies, excused.

**T**Hat which the law of our intended method lays next before us, is the proof

proof of the *Thesis* proposed by a particular Induction. I shall therefore direct my thoughts upon some (it were to over-value the Argument to speak to many) Prodigies, which have been thought the most plausible pretenders to the honor of being *Prophetick Symbols*. Amongst which, Comets are of more especial regard, and have been receiv'd, by the faith or fears of most times, as a kind of Beacon fired from Heaven to alarm the World, and to give intimation of an approaching evil: The luminous tail or train of a Comet especially, seems to the eye of ignorance the emblem of a flaming sword, or fiery rod, and to carry the dreadful images of some mighty scourge prepared to correct a froward World withal. With the Poet it passeth as a ruled case,

--*Nunquam cælo spectatũ impune Cometam.*

A Comet never shone from Heaven to give the World any pannick fears. The *Astrologers* (as confident of the final, as the *Peripateticks* of the formal cause of any such unusual lights) take themselves upon the appearance of them, to be the *Filii cænaculi* which are to expound to the World these mystick characters of Heaven. Indeed any alteration and unwonted wrinkle in the face of Heaven, is thought (like a frown) a presage of anger, and some intended evil, partly because Heaven is conceived the

Throne

Throne of Justice, whence it is most proper to expect the Signs of Vengeance; but especially because the general harmony of its motions and constancy of its parts (whereby it reproacheth the Lunacies and irregularities of this lower World) seem to assure that Anomalies at any time therein cannot issue from the nature of the subject, but the wise purpose of God, by these to warn before he strike, and (as by a *flaming sword*) to drive the World out of its fools paradise, a flattering peace and security.

To encounter the vanity of so specious and obstinate an imagination, I shall endeavor to evince these strange *Phænomena* in Heaven no Prognosticks of any ensuing Evils, as being neither the *effective* nor the *indicative* Signs of them. Onely, before I proceed, I must let the Reader know, that by Comets I mean Comets, truly so called, luminous Bodies, which are carried with a great sobriety and uniformity of motion, and extend their continuance oft to the space of several Weeks or Months. For (as in all orders of things of remark there is the Truth and the Counterfeit) there are real Comets, and *Cometo-eidn* (as a more accurate attendance to the appearances of Nature, hath of late taught men to distinguish) formal and counterfeit ones; some luminous and fiery *impressions* in the Elementary Region, which

*v. R. V. S.  
Ward. Ep. Ex.  
Præf. de Co-  
met.*

only appear and resemble them; the motion whereof is sometimes more desultory and uncertain, where the Exhalation which feeds them is of a more fiery and sulphureous temper; sometimes more quiet and even, where the vapor is more subtil and aereous, and the Air less ruffled and disturbed: their duration commonly determines with a day, seldom exceeds a week. These rarer appearances in the Elementary Region, seem the last endeavors of fire, to imitate and copy out the Glories of the Celestial Region; upon which the common suffrage of Philosophers hath (to the creating of infinite confusions in this Doctrine) conferred the title of Comets: whereas they are a kind of *Participia Naturæ*, partaking somewhat of the nature of a Comet, in their light, bigness, and duration; but more of the condition of a fiery Meteor in their Earthy matter, turbulent motion, and vanishing nature. The necessary and usefulness of this distinction will appear more fully in the sequel. This premised, I assert,

First, *Comets are not to be owned the effective signs of any evils ensuing*: for thus it is vulgarly concluded, that they are; and upon this presumption, that they are a kind of hot and sulphureous Exhalations set on fire, which (as it were the Fever of Nature) prey upon the *humidum*, the moisture of



of it, and so suddenly dry and exhaust it: whence ensue great droughts, dearths, famines, pestilences: And by intending the heart of the Air, they are thought to incline to Feavers, to promote choler in Princes and Nations, and so to lay that fuel in men, which will soon break forth into the flames of publick wars and confusions.

The Reasons I shall tender to perswade the contrary shall not be many, because I design not a triumph but a victory, and would not that this part should swell beyond its just measures and proportions: I shall content my self with some few taken from this threefold Topick; The *Nature*, the *Dimensions*, the *Altitude* of a Comet.

I. I argue it to be no *operative sign of Evil in this lower World*, from the *general Nature thereof*. As for its more specifick and distinct Nature, it is that which many Philosophers have shot their bolt at, but it is hard to say at this distance who hath hit the mark. Enquiries about heavenly Bodies usually conclude in wonder and doubt, but especially about Comets, because appearing so rarely, that the Superstition of Men in reference to them hath much out-grown the Philosophy. Accordingly, in this Argument, we shall find all sorts of Philosophers Ancient and Modern profess themselves unresolv'd, and modest, but only

*Miraculum Naturæ Cometa, idoneum ingenii nostris torquendis, quod admirari debemus, cognoscere nunquam poterimus. Fien. de Comet. p. 18. Res perplexissima est & omnem ferè conatum eludit. From. de Com. l. 3. c. 2. A. 7.*

Nobis rimari  
illa & conje-  
ctura ire in  
occulta, tan-  
tum licet, nec  
cum fiducia  
inveniendi,  
nec sine spe.  
Sen. de Comet.  
loquens Nat.  
Q. 1. 7. c. 29.

some avowed Followers of Aristotle, whose  
usage is too often in Divinity to make a  
great deal of nothing, and in Philosophy  
nothing of a great deal. However those  
weaker notions we can arrive to of the gene-  
ral Nature of a Comet, will sufficiently serve  
the reprehension of that vulgar conceit now  
before our consideration, *that it is a cause of*  
*evil.* For it appears to us in an evidence as  
great as the matter will bear, 1. *That a Co-*  
*met is no exhalation set on fire,* (the great  
hinge which the Opinion turns upon) 2. *That*  
*it is a kind of heavenly body.*

First, *It is no exhalation incens'd.* This is  
now become so judg'd a case in Philosophy,  
that all I shall say to it, will with the most  
reach but the repute of a diligent imperti-  
nence. Yet, because an Ancient Opinion  
may merit the respect of at least a civil re-  
jection, and it still retains in some minds a  
great credit, I shall endeavor to persuade  
the truth of the Proposition from a fourfold  
Topick: First, From the *constant equality*  
*and evenness of its light and figures;* the  
main body of a Comet is observed to main-  
tain an even and constant rotundity, and to  
send forth a direct and uniform ray of light  
in the tail or train thereof: whereas, if it  
were a fire, it would shift its figures accord-  
ing as the necessity of that *Pabulum*, where-  
by it is maintained, did require, and its ap-  
pearances

pearances would sometimes be greater, sometimes less, according as it had more or less subdued and prevailed upon the matter which it spent its force upon. Besides Comets, as they are (like the Planets) in their motion a kind of *Erratick Stars*, so also like them in the nature and condition of their light, they do not *scintillare*, and provoke the eye to more intense notices by any new and uneven vibrations of light, whereas fire sparkles, &c. is alway in motions, direct or circular.

§. 2. *From the clear and constant visibility thereof.* Nothing checks and intercepts our full and free view of an appearing Comet, but (what may also obscure the Sun) the interpose of a cloud: Whereas, were they incensed exhalations, and of such vast dimensions, a Comet must necessarily carry its own Earth about with it to eclipse it sometimes from our sight, because it is supposed, like a torch in the pursuit of its *Pabulum* to burn downward, (though it be apparent that Comets extinguish and become invisible by moving higher into the Heavens,) and by consequence the more gross and uninflamed parts must sometimes needs interrupt our sight of that fire which hath seized the parts which lie next the Sun, or the supposed Elementary fire, which the vulgar Doctrine asserts the occasion of these prodigious fires in Heaven.

Nullis igni-  
bus ordinariis  
& caelestibus  
iter flexum  
est, fideris  
proprium est  
ducere orbem.  
Sen. Nat.  
quaest. l. 7. de  
Comet. c. 23.  
Vide From.  
Met. l. 3. c. 4.  
A. 7.

3. From the uniformity and steadfastness of its motions. Comets, though not all subject to one and the same law of motion (because observed indifferent in their motions to any quarter of Heaven) yet are all noted to proceed with a very great constancy and uniformity, to describe exactly a segment of a great Circle, and not to be acted to any such giddy and casual courses, as fire, which is (in the Elementary Region) determined by the Air, or the circumstances of the matter which feeds it; which way it shall move and incline it self.

4. And lastly, From the dimensions of a Comet. Tycho measured in the tail or train of his Comet, *An. 1577*, ninety six semi-diameters of the Earth; and some Astronomers found in the beard of that which shone *An. 1618*, the extent of 383700 German miles: (in short) if we trust the measures of Astronomy, they have been oft found much to exceed the proportions of the Earth. Now it seems greatly improbable, that such huge volumes of vapors should be drawn together so long and so high, nay impossible, the whole Earth (if but one vast exhalation) being insufficient for their make and supply. It's here return'd, that it were indeed impossible it should appear so great, if the body of a Comet were soly of a Spherical figure; but a Comet (say our Adversaries) may be

expanded to a plain, like a cloud, and so maintain the Opinion of its dimensions: To which we answer, That although in some Position, a plain figure may give the vast shew and appearance of a Comet, yet it cannot in every motion and site, and every Position of Beholders, unless it be of a Spherical figure.

I proceed next to a more positive description of the Nature of a Comet, by proving it to be *some heavenly Body*. What kind of heavenly Body it is (whether condensed *ether*, or some Planetical Exhalation, or a descending Star) is as difficult as unnecessary in this place largely to define. That such an one it is, was a truth credited by the joint suffrages of the more Ancient Philosophers. *Aristotle* seems the first, who presumed against the sense of Antiquity to degrade Comets from Heaven to the degree and place of Meteors, set on fire by his *ignis elementaris*. He had one Philosophy *pro Musæis*, and another *pro Scholis*; which latter because recommended to the Populacy, his chief care was to make like Reeds and Canes, generally smooth and facile in the surface (only interpoling here and there a few knots to exercise the subtiler sort of his auditors) not much caring though it were hollow, and filled out with little besides airy words and



easy speculations, beyond which the most never take care to search and inquire.

Largely to endeavor the proof of this (\* now so acknowledged a) truth, would be to undervalue the pains of more able Undertakers in this Argument, and to over-do the end to which this discourse is level'd.

In short (to omit the consideration of its regular rise and setting) the *Parallax* of a Comet is found much less than that of the Moon; which gives the most undoubted report of its exceeding it in *Altitude*. Besides, if it were not much above our *Atmosphere* (which exceeds not the distance of

four score miles) its *area apparente* would be so strait and inconsiderable, that, as hath been proved, it would in two or three hours quite run out of the compass of our sensible Horizon, nor could possibly continue so long together visible to us as Comets are generally known to do.

Our second Argument, to evince, That no Evil in this lower World owes itself to the malign Aspects of a Comet, is taken from the dimensions thereof. Should it be granted (though, in its just and true dimensions, known to fall far short of the Moon) to equal the measures of a Star of the first magnitude; yet, at such huge removes, how little a force could the beams thereof be supposed to have upon the Earth, little touch-

\* *Cometas (aliquos certe) supra Lunares esse apud Astronomos indubitatum, & nunc communis receptissimamq; est illorum doctrinam, neque solide contrariari posse, facile crediderim.*

Christoph. Scheiner. *Rol. Ursin. l. 4. p. 2. c. 39.*  
*Cometas caelestes esse, à Mathematicis praesertim Tycho & Keplero, nuper sic probatum ut pudeat non credere. Fromund. c. 1. de Comet. Art. 1.*

ed and affected (for ought we know) with the most vigorous influences of the biggest Star in Heaven? The truth is, *Part minima est ipse Cometa sui*, the true and real Comet is the least part of its formal and appearing self, in regard the tail thereof is not *essens*, *sed igneus*, not any real and substantial part thereof (as commonly presumed) flaming forth as the condition of the matter doth invite the fire to follow, but caused by some refraction of light, or (as some conceive) by the shining of the Solar beams through the more porous and spongy parts of the head thereof; some imitation whereof we sometimes have in the beams of the setting Sun darted through a disposed cloud, or through some small crevice in a wall, which, after the figure of a rod, first close and knit together, and then spread and dilate themselves according as they advance further from the *angustia* of the matter whereat they enter: (for it's observed, that still as the Sun circles in its diurnal motion in the Heavens, so doth a Comets tail veer, and respect, though with some flexure sometimes, an opposite point in the Heavens:) so that these mighty vibrations of light from its luminous body, put a great fallacy upon the Eye, and report it much larger then in truth it is. Now then can it be presumed by any man, that will ow any account of his Opinions to Reason, that

(in

(in it self) so small a body, and at so vast a distance, and lasting so inconsiderable a time, and moving so fast a way, can be sufficient for any such notable effects as some easie men intitle it unto? What History almost is there of Comets, but what arrives at us stained and defiled by the superstition of the Writers, able to support the confidence of this perswasion? How little able are we, after the observation of so many hundred years, to assign the Effects of the most noted Stars in Heaven, except the Sun and Moon?

3. Our last Argument was taken from the acknowledged altitude of these unwonted appearances. They which marshal them lowest, assign them place very near the Orb of fire. Now how weak and feeble an impression can a few exhalations kindled at so vast a distance make upon this lower World: especially considering there is the middle Region interposed, by its coldness fitted to temper and qualifie the heated and exsiccate Air, before it mingle with that which we here breathe in. Besides, how little able must those weaker impressions upon the Air be, to stand before those more sensible and vigorous alterations which the succeeding seasons of the year continually make upon it? The Opinion which asserts Comets to be incens'd Exhalations, would carry (in my eye)

eye) more fair appearances of truth, if owning them rather the presages of seasons healthful, and desirable, in regard it supposeth so many noxious and impure Exhalations consumed (at so vast a distance from Earth) by fire, the most potent corrective of an infectious Air.

These Reasons seem sufficient to reach the proof of our first assertion [That Comets are not the operative Signs of Evils:]

I am next to prove them not be the indicative Signs of them; which I shall endeavor,

(1) From the indifferency and universality of their Aspects and Motions. They often pass over the heads of many and different Countries, as that in 1618, was successively vertical to Arabia, Persia, Turkey, Barbary, Morocco, China, Spain, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Muscovy, &c. Now which of these can it be presumed to level its malign Aspects at? Which of these was most concerned in its presages? surely none of them. But as the Sun and Moon being designed to declare the glory of God to the World, their line therefore is gone forth through all the Earth; so (possibly) God intending these wonderful appearances in Heaven, not so much the Monitors of his anger, as of his glory, would have them thus catholick in their Motions, and shew themselves to such variety of people and languages.

Psal. 19. 4.

(2) I

(2) I argue against them from the *very* weakness of that foundation, the art of *prophesying* by them is bottom'd upon; which we may take in the words of a great Master in all curious Arts: *Portendunt Cometa juxta Saturnum pestes & proditones, & sterilitatem; circa Jovem, legum mutationem, mortem Pontificum; juxta Martem, bella; juxta Solem, toti orbi magnam cladem; juxta Lunam, magnas inundationes, aliquando siccatates, &c. juxta Coronam & in Tropico Equinoctialisque, Regum interitum, &c.* The cracks and flaws of which discourse appear so wide and visible, that it is needless to strike it with any argument to make a more full discovery of them. The *Astrologers* (like children) Yet up in their soft imagination some fantastical images of things, and then fear them as if they were great realities. Very solicitous they have ever appeared, to lengthen their cords, (to draw all kind of Persons and Events within the lines and limits of their Art) but very careless to strengthen their stakes (to borrow the expression of the Prophet) to ratify and make good the Principles upon which they do proceed. All the images they speak of in Heaven, and the significations applied to them, owe all their credit solely to the courtesy of imagination.

(3) From the contradiction of Experience,



ence. How many sore Evils hath the World travailed under, which were never signified by any fore-going Comet: (sometimes not hapning for many years together;) and how many Comets have there hapned sometimes in a short compass, not seconded by any notable alterations in the places, to which they seemed especially to have respect? Commendable herein is the diligence of *Gemma Frisius*, in taking notice of as many good as bad Events consequent to the appearance of them. Particularly so happy was that Comet which hapned under *Nero*, that *Seneca* tells us, *Cometis detraxit infamiam*, it cleared the credit of Comets, and brought them into good thoughts. They seem indeed the presages of approaching Evils, either because their *Interpreters* are so well advised as to assign them a competent period of time to produce their Effects in, and to take in whole Kingdoms as the Scene to act their Tragedies upon, and commonly put into their Almanack, onely *dies nefastos*, days marked with some black and sad accidents (which we naturally retain a very quick sense and remembrance of) after the appearance of them; or else the World would appear to treat its inhabitants with as much courtesie after, as before the appearance of a Comet.

The Opinion I now contest, is so receptive

*Multi sunt a nobis visi Cometa, quos nulla usquam tota in Europa subsecuta est perniciet mortalium, et multi clarissimi viri suo fato functi sunt, multi eversis principatus, pessumdata familiae illustrissima, sine ullo Cometa praesagio.* Scal. exerc. 79. sect. 11. Sen. Nat. Qu. 1. 7. c. 17.

tive of Argument against it, that there is the less need of any to press it further, especially considering the great Advocates thereof are so much under the command of a mighty imagination, which delights in easie *conjectures*, *parallels*, and *symbolizing instances* so much, that it quickly makes them or finds them in Nature. Now we shall ever find, that all Persons, which take up Opinions from their own Poetical *Genius* and Buffe phancy, are impregnable to all the assaults of Reason: The *Rosic-Crucians* acted so hugely by imagination in *Philosophy*, some kind of *Chymists* in *Medicks*, the *Cabalists* in *Scripture-Expositions*, *Enthusiasts* in *Religion*, *Figure-Casters* in *Astrology*, are so invincibly resolved upon their *hypotheses*, that (like him in the story) when their hands, those little reasonings wherewith they hold them, are cut off, they will *mordicus defendere*, hold them with their teeth, biting and reviling language, thrown upon their opposers and neglecters. They are entertained with pleasant and easie dreams, and therefore are angry with those which attempt to awaken and discompose them. As for our selves, let us be content rather to sit down in the darkness of an humble ignorance, then to follow an *ignis fatuus*, the pretending light of Divination by a Comet, which leads but to the bog and precipice of a superstitious fear

*Pusilla res  
mundus est,  
nisi in illo,  
quod querat  
omnis mun-  
dus habeat.  
Sen.*

fair and an abused mind. God hath sealed up the natures and ends of some things in the World in a *Seion exotico*, to hide pride from man: He will have some mysteries in every Science past our search, to assure us, That there is one *First Mind*, from whom these depths came forth, and who is able to fathom and comprehend them all.

This part of the main body of my Argument, concerning Comets, exceeding thus its just measures and proportions, must necessarily starve and shrink those which (in my first thoughts) grew next unto it [concerning *Earthquakes*, the apparition of two or three *Suns* at once, and monstrous productions;] for, to redeem my former prolixity, I shall choose to speak to them *sparsim*, as the necessary returns of the argument shall give occasion: Adding in this onely concerning births, which go off from the common figures of their kinds, That as the assistance of *God the Spirit*, with our holy endeavors, doth not take away the *ἀναπληρωμα πεισμών*, the weakneses attendant on Christian practice, because he acts us *ad modum nostrum*; so, neither doth the co-assistance of *God the Father*, with all Natural Agents, quite remove the *ἀναπληρωμα σούτων* (in the phrase of the Philosopher) the Errors of Nature; all things being assisted according to their proper measures, powers and capacities, and with

with due regard to the Laws of action appointed to some other intervening Second Causes. The *beautiful idea's* of things (as lodged in the Divine Mind) are half forc'd to put on deformity, and to appear (like the beams of Heaven stain'd by a bad *medium*) half disguised by that stiff and surly matter upon which they sometimes fall. As the Divine Motions catch some soil, and tast a little of the quality of those Earthen Vessels in which they are lodged.

### SECT. III.

#### *An Answer to the Objections against the precedent Discourse.*

The first Objection taken from the common sense and persuasion of men, proposed. Some general Answers returned unto it. An inquiry made into the Reasons of it, and resolved: 1. Into an ignorance of causes. Ignorance noted to beget confidence in the head, and diffidence in the heart. 2. Into guilt, quickly awakened into a fear of an approaching evil, and why. 3. The application of an humane measure to the divine workings. The commonness and evil of this usage noted in Philosophy and Divinity. 4. A great propension in men to close with any flattering medium to arrive at the knowledge of things future. This noted in all Nations, some account given thereof. 5. The Agency of the Devil. The advantages this persuasion gives him. His design to work base and servile fears in men, noted. 6. The authority of a traditional superstition. Prodiges observed in our times, observed in former. 7. The private Opinions of some contemplative persons, inclining to this persuasion. Some of them touch'd upon. 8. The Nature of the Soul, greatly impressiv to a conceit of  
Parallels,

Parallels, Equalities, and Similitudes in the Government of the World, strange judgments and changes in Earth, described by Poets and Prophets usually, by some mighty changes in Nature. 2. The natural apprehensions of the Soul to entertain things vehement and extraordinary, with great Opinions. The peculiar tempers of some men noted to influence their persuasions. Arguments from general consent, when considerable.

**B**Efore we can have peaceable possession of the truth, for which so much evidence of Reason hath been given in, it will be necessary to remove those Objections with which our title thereunto is a little incumbered. Now these are taken from a fivefold Topick:

1. From the common sense and perswasion of men.

2. The Authority and Testimony of learned Writers.

3. The attestation of common Experience.

4. The seeming evidence of Reason.

5. The Testimony of Sacred Writ.

The four former have weight enough to incline the scale the other way, the latter seems to weigh it quite down.

First, We are wiled with the common sense and perswasion of the World in all ages. He that hath but look'd into the Histories of times past, shall readily observe all Ages greatly propense to observe Natures strayings from her more usual law and rule of operation, and to entertain all strange occurrences with a kind of Prophetick fear of

Object. 1.

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some great evils impendent, of which they are presumed but the harbingers and *Præmonstrations*. And surely this alone might serve sufficiently to vindicate the observation of Prodigies, at least, from all suspicion of vanity and superstition.

Ans.

To deal plainly, there is more of truth in this Objection, then I could wish there were; to which to return *Magister errorum populus*, and that it is the office of Learning not to lead us to the multitude but from it, and that a wise man is the greatest of Prodigies, would be thought but the best of Evasions, and the worst of Answers: Though a wiser man then my self, when prest with the same Objection in a like case [*At omnes Populi, Nationes, utuntur Auspiciis, &c.*] judg'd it beneath any better answer, then this, *Quasi vero quidquam sit tam valde, quàm nihil sapere, vulgare*: I shall choose rather to inquire into the Grounds and Reasons of this so catholick a Perswasion; for truth is best strengthned, and error refuted, *per reductionem ad principia*, by calling men to a view of those Principles and Grounds from which they grow, and into which they finally do resolve.

Tul. de Div.  
L.2.

Now then, the Reasons of this so general Usage and Perswasion, are (I conceive) some or all of these following:

1. Men (for the greater part) are wholly  
strangers

strangers to the causes of these prodigious accidents. Now as fear hath torment, so ignorance hath fear. It is a certain rule, *Nihil aque facit hominem multa suspicari ac nihil scire*: Where we are unprovided of any prenotions of the qualities of objects or persons, Nature hath made us all very suspicious, and fearful to touch, tast, and trust. Persons in the dark are full of monstrous conceits, every shadow is a devil, and every bush a thief to them: And the more men are in the dark as to the knowledg of causes, still the more jealous and fearful of Events. Now the most of men are very ignorant, and therefore superstitiously fearful upon any such irregular Events in Nature.

1 Joh. 4. 19.

—Pueri ir-  
pidant, atque  
omnia cecis  
In tenebris  
metuunt.—

---Formido mortales continet omnes,

*Quod multa in terris fieri cæloq; tuentur;*

*Quorum operum causas nulla ratione videre*

*Possunt: Lucret.*

The Fools Purgatory is as familiar as the Fools Paradise: Ignorance calls every unaccountable symptome in the Patient witchcraft, and every strange accident a Prodigy. Besides, it is the usage of ignorance, especially where the objects are great, vehement, and extraordinary, which fall before it, to conceit a kind of Divinity dwelling in them, and to regard them as examples of some virtue and power superior to Natural. Hippocrates tells us, that sad disease, in Physick

Wild. 17. 13.

Τὸ μὴ Ἰωή-  
 δεῖς, μὴ δὲ  
 κοινόν, ἀλλ'  
 ἰδιόμοσον ἀπε-  
 γνῶς, καὶ περὶ  
 παρασφύρον,  
 εἰς ὑπὸνιον  
 ὁσιότητι  
 ἀνάντων  
 ἐκπλήττει  
 καὶ σέβει  
 καὶ πολλὰς.  
 Plutarch.  
 περὶ μὴ ἔσθ' ἂν  
 Hippocrat.  
 de morb. sacro.

stiled *morb. sacer*, the holy or divine dis-  
 ease, took its appellation hence, Ἀνθρώποι  
 ἰδιόμοσαν θεῖον εἶναι ὑπὸ ἀπειρίας καὶ θαυμάσι-  
 ὁσότητι. Men called it divine, from igno-  
 rance, and a blind wonderment at the strange  
 and vehement symptoms thereof. More-  
 over, it is the nature of Ignorance to pro-  
 duce (as diffidence in the heart, so withal)  
 confidence in the head; for those which  
 know least of things past or present, are usu-  
 ally the most confident determiners upon a-  
 ny mean occasions concerning things future.  
 Upon this account the multitude, to which  
 knowledg was never very friendly, cannot  
 but be greatly impressiv to any great and  
 religious Perswasions concerning Prodigies,  
 especially if much forc'd upon them by the  
 importunity of bold men.

2. *It is the nature of Guilt to be quickly  
 awakened into a fear of an approaching evil:*  
 It sleeps, as they say of the Hare, with its  
 eyes open; is quickly awake to see or  
 phantasie an impendent evil, how secure soe-  
 ever it may commonly seem to it self or o-  
 thers. Guilt is upon every slight occasion  
 πάντες κακῶν, never prophesying good con-  
 cerning men, but evil; it will fly when none  
 pursues. There go usually along with a guilt-  
 y breast (when fair colors hang out in the  
 face) black jealousies and fears, φοβησά τις  
 ἐκδοχὴν κρίσεως, a fearful expectation of  
 vengeance;

vengeance; and therefore like *Belshazzar* where it cannot distinctly expound Gods strange characters, it yet concludes the general intention to be wrath and judgment. The Author of the *Book of Wisdom* hath therefore well exprest the nature of Guilt, thus; *Wickedness condemned of her own witness, is very timorous; and being pressed with conscience, always forecasteth terrible things.*

Wisd. 17. 11.  
Ad monstri  
conspicuum  
omnes plerun-  
que subito ex-  
horrescunt;  
veluti consci-  
entiam stimu-  
lo peccati vul-  
neratam ag-  
noscentes, atq;  
de ira Dei,  
vel in anteceden-  
tibus ani-  
madversâ, vel  
in futuris ne-  
gotiis metuen-  
dâ singuli  
cogitent.  
S. Aug. lib. de  
Civit. Dei.

Guilt hath an injured God always presented to it: now where our lives and fortunes are in the hand of offended greatness, we are apt to conclude what it will do with us from what it may. Where men mistrust (as Guilt generally doth) every *nutus*, words good or bad, all actions, but especially such as are to us obscure and unaccountable, are the seed of jealousy. Guilt can spell death out of Gods sweetest Promises, much more out of his dark and intricate Providences. The words of a late learned Writer, being so full and pregnant in this Argument, it will be a sufficient service thereof, to lay them before the Reader: *Unhallowed minds, that have no inward foundations of true holiness to fix themselves upon, are easily shaken and tossed from all inward peace and tranquillity: And as the thoughts of some supreme Power above them seize upon them, so they are struck with the lightning thereof into in-*

Mr. Smith's  
Disc. of Su-  
perstition,  
P. 31.

ward affrightments, which are further increased by a vulgar observation of those strange, stupendious, and terrifying Effects in Nature, whereof they can give no certain reason, as Earthquakes, Thundrings and Lightnings, blazing Comets, and other Meteors of like nature, which are apt to terrifie those especially who are already unsettled and chased with an inward sense of guilt; and, as Seneca speaks, *Inevitabilem metum ut supra nos aliquid timeremus incutiunt*. Petronius Arbiter hath well described this business for us:

Primus in orbe Deos, fecit timor, ardua  
cœlo

Fulmina cum caderent, discussaque mœnia  
flammis,

Atque ictus flagraret Athos.-----

From hence it was that the Libri fulgurales among the Romans, and other such like Volumes of Superstition, swelled so much, and that the pulvinaria Deorum were so often frequented, as will easily appear to any one a little conversant in Livy, who every where sets forth this Devotion so largely, as if he himself had been too passionately in love with it.

3. The strict observation of Prodigies hath risen from the application of an humane measure to the divine actions. All actions of consequence done in the World by hu-



mane Agents, come forth *per te exemplar* *ocor*, with observation, they are usually prefac'd with somewhat which may raise expectation, and give notice. *Seneca* speaks of a *pompa mortis*; there is also *pompa vitae*. Men use not to fall into business, but descend; and their actions of moment, though they have sometimes abrupt conclusions, yet it is seldom that they have abrupt beginnings. Now it is accordingly thought, that all Gods actions of remark, judgments especially, must be stamp'd with an humane signature, be ushered with the pomp and solemnity of some prodigious and preternatural occurrences: Whereas God hath threatened not onely to destroy bad men by his judgments, but to surprize them, to storm them without a precedent Summons. We read of nothing in the *Revel.* to be concealed from men, but what judgments the *seven thunders uttered*. God often by Prophecies and mighty Signs warned former Ages, and expects now that former Ages should warn us.

1 Thes. 5. 3.

Psal. 64. 7.  
37. 2.

Rev. 10. 4.

1 Cor. 10. 6,  
11.

There is no one thing which hath set up such a multitude of idols, vain and fantastical conceits (as the excellent *Verulam* observes) in Philosophy, *quàm naturalium operationem ad similitudinem actionum humanarum reductio*; the reducing of all natural operations to a likeness with the acts of men; and

Aug. Scient,  
l. 5. c. 4.

the preferring of Man, the lesser World, the great Glass of Nature, in whose fabrick and actions, the simular images and imitations of all things in the greater World should be represented. And to as many vain imaginations in *Divinity* have men been exposed, by making, as it were, of God after their own image, and fastning upon him either *εἰδὸς* or *νόθος*, or *ἡθὺς ἀνθρώπων*, and proposing of the customs, reasonings, passions, and counsels of a man, as the *Jacobs* staff, to estimate the height and extent of the counsels and actions of God, whose ways and thoughts, as we are told, are not laid out by any of those short lines which ours are.

Mal. 55. 9.

4. Men are greatly propense to close with any flattering medium to arrive at the much desired knowledg of things to come. The more the fruit of the *Tree of knowledg* is plac'd beyond our reach, the more impatient desires after it use to rise up in our minds : now such is the knowledg of things wrapt up in futurity. Hence *Astrology* (which feeds men with the airy hopes of this knowledg) so valuable a Science with the *Chaldeans* ; *Oracles*, so much attended to by the *Grecians* ; *Auguries*, by the *Romans* ; any kind of *Prophets* by the *Hebrews* ; the *ἐναιοντα σημεια*, auspicious Signs amongst the ruder *Heathens*. Men have raked in the bowels of sacrificed men, women and children

dren for this knowledg, as *Photius* tells us;

*Gentes olim Mithra Sacrificia facientes, vi-* In Bibliothec.  
cod. 258. in  
vit. S. Athan.

*ros, fœminas & pueros multabant: extis in-*  
*spectis divinantes, &c.* Among the *Romans*,  
the more the Sword of Authority mow'd  
down those weeds, *Astrologers*; *Chalde-*  
*ans*, &c. the faster and thicker they grew.

In short, *Tully* hath noted, that, no King Qui Rex un-  
nor People ever was there, with whom some quam fuit,  
presumed divine Predictions were not in use quis populus  
and credit: to which I further add, That it qui non utere-  
is hard to mention that thing (necessary or tur prædictione  
contingent) upon which the *Ethnick* vanity ne divina?  
had not affix'd some signification and pre- Tul. l. 1. de  
sage or other. Nay, and even in very good Divin.

men in sacred Writ, we find not this itch Dan. 12. 8.  
after the knowledg of the condition of fu- Mat. 24. 3.  
ture times sufficiently kil'd. 1 Thes. 5. 1.  
Joh. 21. 21,  
22.

This desire of knowing things future, is  
owing partly to that mighty thirst in the  
Soul after knowledg in the latitude thereof;  
partly to a secret distrust of Providence,  
which we cannot endure to follow even  
blindfold, like *Abraham*, not knowing whi-  
ther we go; partly to our natural restlessness  
in uncertainties, and the Souls not enduring  
a perpetual crucifixion between hopes and  
fears; partly to that impressiveness of spi-  
rit which times of action and change (for in  
such, Prodigies and Prophecies are most cri-  
tically recorded) are generally attended  
with;

with; as also to that *nausea* which the tedious repetition of things present and familiar creates in the Soul of man. For these Reasons, men are very ready to attend to a Prodigy as to a kind of silent Oracle, to resolve them in their inquiries *de futuro*, which is indeed but profanely to go to God, whose work it is, as they would to a common Fortune-teller.

To dismiss this particular, There are especially two sorts of things which command our minds to the most quick and serious attendances; *viz. Things rare and extraordinary*, Oracles, Mysteries, new Notions, curious Arts, Secrets, Stories of Apparitions: And *Predictions and Divinations*: (for we shall observe the Soul especially delighted in its inquiries into times far past, and long hence to come; whereby it grasps in a kind of petty infinity both the ends of time at once.) Now then, Prodigies may quickly call forth the serious notices and regards of the *most*, as being *mira*, matters in themselves rare and wonderful, and also, in common opinion, *monstra*, things which can shew them what is to come, and so lift the Soul above the narrow *Horizon* of things present and sensible, which it hath so often surfeted and cloy'd it self withal.

5. *The hand of Foab*, the Agency of the Devil, seems not a little engaged in this business.

*ness*, the strengthening of this Opinion of Prodigies, with which the minds of men are so much possess'd : for he serves no small ends upon Persons entertained with such Observances. By such curious, he calls men off from more necessary, searches and inquiries. Humble ignorance, he knows, in matters too high for us, is a fruitful mother of devotion : It is his usage to tempt men, like the Flie, into the fire, by setting the appearances and hopes of a greater light before them. Besides, he works men hereby into servile and superstitious apprehensions of God, (for the Opinion of such Prodigies represents him before the Soul with a Rod of Vengeance perpetually in his hand) then which, there is not a more fatal cause of Atheism in the World. A Belief of a God, is that Fort which the Devil could never storm, never force by any direct temptation ; and therefore he designs, by such terrible and servile conceits wrought in the hearts of men, to undermine it : For perpetual jealousies and slavish fears of God, like over-heated waters, boil over at last, and extinguish that fire, that faith and sense of God, which first produc'd them. When the Notion of a Deity stands alway before the mind, like a *Gorgons* head, pregnant with nothing but horrors and dismays, it quickly works and turns it to a (stony) stupid neglect of Him ;



so to get rid of that *Οἰκτιρον Δαιμόνιον*, that mighty fear, which was its continual Executioner.

Moreover, the Devil (no doubt) loves to bring men off from a noble and generous temper: And as it is the design of Religion to *cast out slavish fear*, and to introduce a spirit of true freedom and confidence toward God; so it is the work of the Devil to call on a *spirit of bondage* and a perpetual fear, that so he may see in men the more lively and express images and portraitures of himself, who *believes and trembles*. He would have his Rites of worship of old, *φειλά μυστήρια*, frightful and amazing mysteries: the Idols wherein he was worship'd bear in their very names and titles a remembrance of that baseness and servility of spirit which attended his Votaries in the service of so absolute a Tyrant, being stiled sometimes *מפלצות horrors* (as it is rendred in the margin, 2 *Chro*. 15. 16.) sometimes *עצבים* and *אימים*, signifying *trouble* and *terror*; and the Devils are stiled *שערים*, coming from a word which signifies *horrere*, because usually tending themselves to view in the most frightful forms.

Now this superstitious Perswasion of Prodigies doth hugely minister to this bondage of spirit, and tends to seal men with the mark of *Cain* (according to the *Jews*) a perpetual

*Isai.* 40. 5.  
*Jer.* 50. 38.

*Pla.* 106. 36.

petual trembling and astonishment. The observation of Prodigies proving so serviceable to the dark Kingdom, if the experience of former times seem at all to credit and recommend it, I should be ready to assert that of them which S. Bernard doth of Dreams; *Ex astu Diaboli aliquando vera pronunciant*, *Serm. 68. De ut toties in multis fallant*; Through the *somnis.* subtil agency of the Devil, they appear to declare truth sometimes, that they may the oftner abuse men with vain hopes or fears, with the less suspicion afterward.

6. This common Perswasion in men, is owing very much to the power and magisterial authority of a traditional Superstition, handed down from the very first times of Gentile ignorance. There may very easily be a *Cabala Errorum*, though hardly a *Cabala Veritatum*; Our Nature in this lapsed state (as the ground to weeds) being a Mother to Error, but (as that to good corn) a Stepmother to Truth. How apt our Nature is to catch and propagate the infection of a superstitious Tradition, may appear from that ancient and modern usage of praying for a Person upon neezing, the vulgar Presages consequent to the approach of any strange fish to our shoar; the regarding of any casual stops and breaches in any known Rivers; any odd noises heard in the silences of the night, and Births seal'd with the odd figures of an ungoverned imagination:

nation: All which, and many more (too mouldy with age to set before the Reader) were received of old among the Heathens, and at this day among too many Christians, as Divine Monitors, and as Natures starting out of its usual road, like the *As* in sacred Writ, because some destroying *Angel* stands just before it.

We shall find several strange alterations in Nature, consequent to the barbarous murder of *Cæsar*, and precedent to the battle at *Philippi*, recorded with the most solemn regards of the Heathen Poet:

Virgil. Georg. l. i. *Tempore quanquam illo Tellus quoque & æquora Ponti,*

*Obscænique Canes, importunaque Volucres  
Signa dabant; quoties Cyclosum effervere in  
agros*

*Vidimus undantem ruptis fornacibus Ætnam,  
Flammarumque globos, liquefactaque volvere  
saxa?*

*Armorum sonitum toto Germania cælo  
Audiit: insolitis tremuerunt motibus Alpes.  
Vox quoque per lucos vulgo exaudita silentes  
Ingens: & simulachra modis pallentia miris  
Visa sub obscurum noctis: pecudesque locuta,  
Infandum! sistunt amnes, terraque dehiscunt:  
Et mæstū illacrymat templis ebur, æraq; sudāt,  
Nec puteis manare cruor cessavit, — —*

Upon which plain Song of the Poets, to  
serve

serve the perspicuity of this Paragraph, I  
thus descant :

*Natures distorted face, while Cæsar's slain,  
Seem'd but the index of some hidden pain.  
The trembling Earth, loud Seas, the Birds of  
Night,*

*And howling Dogs, the guilty World affright,  
As tokens of some plague; that fatal wound  
Struck Nature to a fever, all the ground  
The Cyclops held, was burnt by Sulphur  
thrown*

*From Ætna, of all bounds impatient grown :  
Whence globes of flame and heated stones took  
birth,*

*As if the Gods would thunder from the Earth.  
The horrid noise of arms in Heav'n (most us'd  
To softer musick) Germany amuz'd.*

*The Alps look'd white, and trembled to appear  
But the Prophetick images of Fear.*

*Each Grove, more Vocal then Dodona's, bears  
Not Whispers, but loud Voices, to the Ears.*

*The Ghosts, more pale then He, appear'd in  
fight,*

*While the World mourn'd ith' Sables of the  
Night.*

*Beasts spake, while Sorrow struck Men dumb;  
and then*

*The Rivers stood as much amaz'd as Men :*

*The Earth appear'd to gasp, it cleft so deep,*

*And Marble Pillars, without figure, weep.*

*A cold sweat on the brazen Statues stood,  
And Water blush'd it self to blood.*

And we shall observe these Prodigies, and others which the Poet there enumerates, as much commanding the serious fears and solemn observations of many Christians now, as of the more benighted Heathens heretofore. A matter which the great power and authority of a traditional Superstition (to which men are by their own guilty minds, and ignorance of the Nature of God, so naturally inclined) gives us the most easie and natural account of. Thus Gerson, inquiring the reason of the vulgar observation of days and hours, the regard of Omens, the pretended Signs of good or bad luck, concludes them to grow *ex Gentilium & Paganorum & aliorum infidelium, derelicta, in principio conversionis ad fidem Christianam, superstitione.*

Joh. Gerson.  
Trac. cont.  
Superstit.  
dier. observat.

But that which might possibly much assist this Tradition, was the succeeding of *Rome Christian*, as into the place, so into very many of the Rites and Usages of *Rome Pagan*, (as might be easily made appear at large, were that our business) and into as large a power over the Faiths and Consciences of Men, as *Rome Pagan* had over their Bodies; and so was enabled to mold them into what Opinions and Practices they might best serve them-



themselves upon. Sure I am, we find in the *Romish* Writers frequent mention of the sweating and weeping, the sad and direful aspects of the Statues of their Saints (especially \* *Franc. Xaverius*) to suit some more solemn and sad Occasions.

\* *Vid. Gaspar. Schor. Physic. Curios. l. 6. c. 4.*

7. *The private Opinions of some contemplative Persons, may (possibly) not a little encourage and strengthen the Perswasion of Presages by Prodigies.*

Those which conceive the Angels, as a kind of Heavenly *Intelligencers* always at hand to admonish and inform us, when (through the sagacity of their Nature) they espy a cloud of vengeance (as yet but *as big as a mans hand*) ready to overspread Heaven, and to fall down upon men, may (without much forcing) perswade themselves that all these unusual occurrences are owing to their courteous Agency, designing by them to warn men to repentance to *fly from the wrath* approaching. And accordingly I find

several Writers, *Pomponatius, Machiavel, Kircher, Cornel. Gemma*, (to derive a reputation upon the Opinion of Presages by Prodigies) intitling the Angels to those *strange voices and stranger sights in the Air, the voluntary tolling of Bells in steeples, some strangely monstrous Births, dreadful Apparitions forerunning some great Mortalities*, which stories are abundant in; de-

*Pomponat. de immort. anim. c. 14. Machiavel. disput. l. 1. c. 56. Kircher. Musurg. l. 9. c. 4. Corn. Gemma de Nat. Charact. l. 1. c. 5. p. 61.*

signing by these and the like silent nods and becks to awaken the more heedful and observant part of the World to a sense of the Divine Providence, and to provide against a shower of vengeance ready to fall down upon a guilty people: They tell us that the Angels limn forth, in as lively figures as they can, those images and *idea's* of approaching judgments (in the things of Nature) which they have received from the Divine Mind, that so a timely Repentance may possibly scatter the clouds, and renew their expiring lease of peace and tranquillity.

Others again seem to me to apprehend the World, as a kind of *Great Animal*, informed by a very subtil and apprehensive Spirit, which out of an hidden and inexplicable sense of an impendent evil (as many creatures have of an approaching storm) starts as it were and shrinks in, and in its several parts suffers mighty emotions and disturbances. But this notion will perhaps look more temptingly, when presented to us as the Parents thereof are pleased to dress it forth: *There is* (saith a late Writer) *that sympathy and fellow-feeling which God hath put in his whole Creation, whereby each part hath a care of the whole, and according to its measure doth endeavor its preservation. As in the body natural of man, upon the next and immediate approach of death, some parts are put*  
into

into sudden tremblings and convulsions, whereby they discover the nearness, and, as far as they can, labor to prevent the danger of that Enemy: So God hath ordered it in the Great Body of the World, that Earthquakes like convulsions, Eclipses like fallings of the eyes, and such other unusual Prodigies (which have an analogy and resemblance to the accidents of the body of man) should commonly precede that ruine, wherein any one State or Nation is finally to be involved. As when our Savior died, the Sun was darkned, the Rocks were rent, the Earth shook, by a kind of natural sympathy and compassionate horror, at so dreadful and amazing a spectacle: So when Jerusalem was to be destroyed, our Savior himself foretels, that there should be Earthquakes, and Famines, and Pestilences, and fearful Sights, and great Signs, as the Van-carriers and Out-guard to that more terrible desolation which was to follow them. What the Apostle therefore says elegantly concerning future Glory, that the whole Creation was made subject to vanity and misery for mans sin, doth groan, and, as it were, travail in pain, until it be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and manumitted or set free to partake of the glorious liberty of the sons of God; so, while it is in the state of vanity, God hath put into it such a quick sense, that not one part can grieve, but it will

after a sort grieve together, and discover by its tremblings, shakings, Eclipses, and extraordinary changes, that there is some great judgments a coming.

The pretty Allegories and Allusions of which Discourse (but the watering of weak and worthless stuff) might possibly shew not unhandsomly in an Oration, but are too airy and thin for a Sermon; as the honey under the Law might be of use at the *Table*, but was too frothy and luscious for the *Altar*. As for that *vanity* now upon the Creation, it is soly passive therein, and subject to it; and as for that vizard upon the face of Nature, those direful and amazing alterations in the whole frame of the World, which attended our Saviors Passion, and the fates of *Ferusalem*, they are instances concluded miraculous and extraordinary, (whose return may be expected with their occasions) and so are so far from coming up to, that they scarce look towards our present case, as shall appear more fully in due place.

As for the Opinion it self, though (at least as some explain it) it hath appeared to the most too fine and subtil to bear the weight of any such serious Doctrines as our Adversaries hang upon it; yet allow it as much strength and assurance as Fancy can create it, it will appear too common and unhallowed a Ground to build any  
Sacred

Sacred and Religious Doctrine and Practice on; the ancient Perswasions of Presages by the *Extā*, by *Auguries*, by *Omens*, by *Dreams*, proceeding upon the same *hypothesis*. Thus we find the Patrons of such kind of Divinations endeavoring to procure reputation to their Opinion, by alledging, that there was *Cognatio Natura*, *Concentus* ὁ συν-  
*πάθεια rerum*, a kind of common sense in Na-  
 ture, a secret consent and sympathy between the parts of this Great Animal, the World; and that therefore nothing could happen in one part, without some touch and passion in another: And *Synesius* prefers Dreams and portentous Events to the regards of men, ὡς τῶν ἐσσημῶν ἀεὶ δὴ λα γράμματα, as the evident letters and symbols of things to come, because there is (saith He) τῶν μερῶν τῷ κόσμῳ συγγένεια, a great affinity and common feeling between the several parts of the World; and that in the World Ἐλκει ἄλλο δι' ἄλλου, ἔχων ἐνέχυρα παρόντα τῶν πλείων ἀπάντων, καὶ φωνὰς καὶ σχήματα, *Ec.* one thing draws and affects through another, carrying the present pledges, voices, figures and images of most distant objects. But this antick notion gives not onely sense to the World, but Prophecy, makes it but one great Oracle, a kind of State-Weather-glass, reporting in its own motions and variations the approaching changes in a Nation:

Vid. Tull. de  
 Divin. l. 2.

Synes. περὶ  
 Ενυπνίων.



a conceit which I shall deliver to those which are better at believing than I am.

8. *It is the nature of the Soul to be greatly impressivè to a Perswasion of Parallels, Equalities, Similitudes, in the frame and Government of the World:* and that (indeed) so far, as to make them (by the poesie of Fancy) where it cannot really discover them; that so it may please and solace it self in some supposed lines and figures of its own uniform and harmonious nature portray'd upon the World; and it were easie to shew how this temper hath betrayed it to a great many pretty dreams, both in science and common life: \* To this among the rest, that there is a very rigid and strict analogy and conformity between the Macrocosm and the Microcosm, the World and Man, that he is a kind of *Terella*, containing lines, natures, conditions and necessities correspondent to those which display themselves in the World with greater pomp and observation, (a conceit as dear to some Ancient and Modern Writers as their very eyes:) upon this assurance, they prettily tell us, that what Catarhs and Rheums are in the lesser World, that are immoderate Rains and Snows in the greater: that to Epilepses, Vertigo's, and Inflammations in Man, there answer some faintings of light in the Sun, Whirlwinds, and Vulcano's in the

\* Cornel.  
Gemma de  
Nat. Charect.  
l. 1. c. 3. p. 39.  
c. 4.

the World; to Apoplexies, Dropfies, Lethargies, there are Analogous Eclipses, Inundations of Waters; that the Stone and the Gout in us are but the Antitypes of Monstrous Births and Preternatural Generations in the World: and (because when Men have said thus much, they may say what they please) they add, *Quemadmodum morbo acuto laborantibus, certi sunt indices, &c.* As to those which labor of some acute disease, there are certain signs appointed by Nature to give notice of an approaching death or recovery, (as there are also signs of the disease approaching;) so God hath appointed all tumors and swellings, all the labors of Nature, as a kind of Indices to this great Volume of the World, to declare what Desolations and Plagues are to be expected therein.

This general temper of the Soul easily inclines it to believe great and mighty changes in States, usher'd with the solemnity of some mighty and analogous changes in Nature, and that all terrible evils are prefac'd or attended with some prodigious and amazing alterations in the Creation; that so the black and dreadful dress of the Stage may be correspondent to the Tragical part shortly to be acted thereupon. The mind readily apprehends it a great *Decorum*, to imagine the Children of the Creation trembling,

F 4

looking

looking gaffly, and running out of their places, when their Father is just a taking of the Rod of vengeance into his hand. Hence perhaps it is, that we generally find great troubles and judgments on Earth, described especially by Persons Ecstasical, Prophets and Poets (whose speeches usually rather follow the easie sense of the Soul, then the rigid truth of things) by all the examples of horror and confusion in the frame of the Creation. The Prophet *David* describes Gods going forth to judgment, thus, *The Earth shook and trembled, the foundations also of the Hills moved and were shaken, because He was wroth, &c.* And the Apocryphal Prophet *Esdra*s characters the horrors of an approaching judgment by Predictions of (the most proper glasses to represent them) dreadful Accidents in the World; *Blood shall drop out of the wood, and the stone shall give his voice, the Sea of Sodom shall cast out fish, and make a noise in the night, &c.* So the day of Gods vengeance upon *Jerusalem*, and in that, as its type, upon the whole World, is described (as some think) but figuratively, in the phrase of *turning the Sun into darkness, and the Moon into blood*; such expressions being correspondent to the sense of the Soul, which conceives it most proper that there appear no smiles in the face of Nature, but that she come forth clothed with terror and  
amaze-

Pla. 18. 7.

2 Esdr. 5. 5, 6,  
7, 8.

Acts 2. 20.

amazement, when some great vengeance and destruction is present or at hand.

This disposition of the Soul doth never more strongly exert it self, then when the Prodigies (being no unfitting emblems of the judgment) do impregnate imagination, and offer a mighty assistance thereunto: Thus, as it is called, the raining of blood (which is but water tinctured by the condition of the soil whence it ariseth, or rather where it falls) shall strongly sollicite the fear of some great effusion of blood in the State; the appearance of two Suns at once (which is but the figure and glory of the Sun drawn by its own beams upon a disposed cloud) shall greatly encourage the Fancy of two Competitors for Royalty in a Nation; some great Eclipse seems (to a soft imagination) to hang the World with black against the approaching Funerals of some great Person; the casual parting of the River *Ouse* in *Bedfordshire* seemed (after the event) a Presage of the succeeding division between the House of *York* and *Lancaster*. These, and many more, where they meet with an imagination strong enough to supply and relieve their weakness, shall prove an event beyond *Geometry*, and the Reasons and experience of all men and times.

9. *Humane Nature is greatly propense to entertain things vehement and extraordinary with*

Plin. Nat.  
Hist. l. 2. c. 93.

with an Opinion of a more then ordinary sacredness in, and presence of God with them. Pliny, upon the mention of some Works in Nature of a very strange and singular make and figure, entred by him under the head of *Miracula terrarum*, he adds, *Quibus in rebus, quid possit aliud causæ efferre mortalium quispiam, quam diffusa per omne Natura subinde aliter atq; aliter Numen erumpens?* and this because it is so natural to man to receive such instances with very great Opinions: for otherwise a due estimate of things would intitle a Gnat or a Flea, though a less Being, a greater Miracle then *Ætna* or a *Firy Meteor*. In the Old Testament, things more vulgar and accommodate to an humane size and measure, have the name of Man called upon them: thus we read of the *Rod of a Man*, 2 Sam. 7. 14. the *Cords of a Man*, Hos. 11. 4. the *Pen of a Man*, Isai. 8. 1. that is, gentle and usual: On the other side, things rare, and which hardly admit their pattern, are attributed unto God; *Horeb the Mount of God*, Exod. 3. 1. the *River of God*, Psa. 65. 9. the *Trees of God*, Psa. 104. 16. the *Fire of God*, Job 1. 6. that is, great and extraordinary. Now the ancient Hebrews (to whose law of speaking the Holy Ghost accommodates himself) in their customs and language, seem to make the truest report of the easie sentiments of simple Nature.

Accord-



Accordingly, these strange and prodigious Alterations in Nature appear to men (because not of familiar occurrence) stamp'd with some characters and touches of Divinity; and so, apt to raise a great Opinion of themselves in men, as if sent forth upon no less errand then to call them to an expectation of some strange work from God. These Reasons offer some probable account of the enormous growth and strength of this Perswasion: to all which might be added (as the reason of all the other) *the great power and vigor of an undisciplin'd imagination in most men*: this makes them receive any strange Occurrences with great Opinions. We shall accordingly observe *Omens, the falling of the Salt, a Dream of a Funeral, an unlucky day or hour, the voice of the Screech-Owl, odd noises in the night*, to command the most solemn regards of Persons whose Imagination is more busie and active then their Reason, *Heathens, Women, young Persons, Melancholicks, superstitious or infirm Persons, the illiterate multitude*. To a soft and impressive Fancy, Comets, strange Sights in the Air, &c.

*Nomina sunt ipso pene tremenda sono.*

From what hath been hitherto discoursed, it is easie to infer the fallacy of that first Argument against us, taken *from the common Perswasions of men*: For it is a Perswasion  
very

*Pessimum omnium est augurium quod ex consensu capitur, in rebus intellectibus, &c. nihil enim multis placet nisi imaginatio nem feriat, aut intellectum vulgarium notionum nodis astringat. Verul. Nov. Org. Aph. 77.*

very general indeed, but growing not from natural, but casual or abusive Principles: and in such a case, the more common and prevalent the Perswasion be, the more dangerous, because it derives a great credit upon Error, and gives it the color of an Oracle. *Vox populi* is a fallacious Topick to conclude from, except the Opinion generally maintained cross the ease and interest of the World, and men, like *Uriah*, carry the letters, the Principles, which judg and condemn themselves, [as the common Notions concerning Good and Evil, of the Existence of a Deity, a future Judgment, the Souls immortality, &c. do ;] it is in this case a sign that the truth is sealed upon the Natures of men, and rather lays hold of them, then they of it.

And this in Answer to that first Objection.

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SECT.

## SECT. IV.

*The Objection grounded on Humane Authority answered.*

The Testimonies of Heathens, Fathers, Modern Writers, alledged against the truth contended for, answered; first, more generally, some account given why so many learned men have given countenance to the contrary Perswasion. A particular return to the testimony of Herodotus. Heathens greatly fond of this notion, and why. The Fathers no great Favorers of this Doctrine. The testimony of Tertullian unserviceable to our Adversaries. S. Austin expresse against them. The testimony of Machiavel disabled by a threefold consideration. Atheism and Superstition mutually assistant to each other. Machiavel and Pomponatius remarkable for Atheism, and their great regard of Prodigies in the full latitude of them. Dr. Jackson, whence (in probability) so inclinable to the regard of Prodigies: some probable account of his lost Book of Prodigies. The ill use the Heathens made of Prodigies. The observation of them unbecoming our Religion, and a dishonor to God.

**A**rguments from Humane Authority generally shew better in *Rhetorick* then *Logick*, and press the *modesties* of men more then their *judgments*. Yet, because the *most* judg altogether by their *Proxies*, and are apt to suspect fallacies in strong Reasons, but none in great Names, I shall next make Answer to a second Objection with which this Truth is assaulted, *viz.* the *Testimony of learned Writers* [*Heathens, Fathers, Modern Authors*] to the contrary: where two of each kind it may suffice to take

take notice of as the representatives of the rest.

Herodot. l. 6.  
c. 27.

Among *Heathen Writers*, *Herodotus* seems to our Adversaries of especial remark in this Argument, entring it as a tried case, *Quoties ingentes eventura sunt calamitates vel civitati, vel nationi, solent signis prænunciari*: And *Valerius Maximus* seems to subscribe the Opinion in that whole Chapter which he hath written *De Prodigis*, and the Regards due to them.

Among the *Fathers*, we find *Tertullian* telling the Heathens, deriding the Christian Doctrine of an Everlasting fire, of some prodigious Mountains always burning; upon occasion whereof He adds, *Hoc erit testimonium ignis aeterni, hoc exemplum jugis judicii; pœnam nutriendes Montes uruntur & durant*. And *S. Austin* having noted, that a little before the *Bellum Sociale* in the Roman Empire, Dogs, Horses, Oxen, Asses, and such like creatures (usually the most submissive subjects to their imposed law of obedience to Man) all on a sudden, put off their gentle and tractable Natures, ran away from their owners, grew fierce and hurtful, and approach'd as near to Lions and Wolves as their shapes and figures would permit: of which strange occurrence He thus delivers his sense, *Quod si hoc signum fuit quod tantum malum fuit, quantum malum fuit illud, cujus*

*Cuncta animalia humanis usibus subdita, &c. non solum aliorum, verum etiam Dominorum aversabantur accessum, non sine exitio aut periculo audientis, si quis de proximo urgeret. De Civit. Dei, l. 3. c. 23.*

*cujus hoc signum fuit!* Amongst Modern Writers, Machiavel (a Person generally thought a more fast retainer to Atheism then Superstition) hath thus abetted the observation of Prodigies, *Ut causam facile confitebor me ignorare, ita rem ipsam cum ex antiquis tum novis exemplis agnoscere oportet & confiteri, omnes magnos motus quicunque aut urbi aut regioni evenerunt, vel à conjectoribus, vel à revelatione aliqua, prodigiis aut celestibus signis prædici & prænnunciari solere:* To whom may be added (to pass by Luther, Melancton, Camerarius and others) the Testimony of the reverend Dr. Jackson; *The maner (saith He) of Gods forewarning is very various; sometimes he forewarns by Signs in the Sun and Moon, sometimes by Apparitions in the Air, sometimes by Monstrous Births, sometimes He makes the Murrain of Cattel, and Mortality of Beasts of the field, or Birds of the air, fore-runners of Plagues and Wars, &c.* And so far received he them, *ὡς Θεῶν ἀνῳρυγµα* (as Eusebius styles the Portenta preceding the overthrow of Jerusalem) as God's visible Sermons of Repentance, that, as we are informed, He wrote a just Treatise (lost in his life-time) concerning Prodigies or Divine Forewarnings betokening Blood.

Machiavel.  
disputat. l. 1.  
c. 56.

Serm. on Luk.  
13. 6, 7, 8.

Vid. Prefat.  
to his Book of  
the Eternal  
Truth of  
Scripture,  
Edit. 1653.

To all which Testimonies my Answer shall be, first, more general, That it is no wonder



wonder to see this Opinion credited by some great Names, in regard, that as in Heresie the People usually follow the Learned, being (prompted thereto by a secret sense of their own insufficiencies) in a matter more abstract and subtil, more apt to believe then to judg: so in Superstition, the Learned are not seldom observed to follow the People; because easily surprized into an Opinion that can enter so valuable a plea for it self as common consent. This Notion of Presages by Prodigies being so popular and catholick, wise men in their first and unwary years (when they are the Disciples of the People) may entertain conceits thereof which shall prescribe against the strongest Reasons to dispossess them. As Iron, in a greater and more massie body, follows the law of common Nature in all heavy bodies, and moves to the Earth; but in smaller pieces it serves the law of its own private nature, and directs it self to the Loadstone: Thus Learned men, where they are prest by the force and weight of Education, and a common prejudice, generally follow common Nature in men (which inclines to imbrace Society) and therefore move in judgment after the way of the Earth; but in matters out of vulgar ken, and where they cannot be tempted by a common Agreement, they move after the *way of counsel*, and pursue the  
the

the dictates of their own private light and understanding. Even wise men, in many instances, hold *Aras & focos*, their Faith and their Estates, by the same Tenure, *Tradition from Ancestors*; and therefore we may receive their judgments (*tanquam ex Cathedra*) as engagements to consider, not always (*tanquam ex Tripode*) as obligations to believe.

I proceed next to a more distinct and particular Answer to the several Authorities alledged: And first, to the Testimony of *Heathens*. The many places of Scripture, wherein God hath threatned to issue out a speedy Arrest upon Persons deeply indebted to his Justice, without so much as warning them by any lesser judgments and signs of Vengeance to *agree with him while in the way*, do sufficiently resolve me of the vanity of that forementioned Assertion of *Herodotus*: Yet, because it is delivered upon the seeming faith of a great Experience, and our Adversaries build so much upon it, I return to it.

I. *It is a conclusion which proceeds upon the credit of a single instance*; that of the People of *Chios* there mentioned, whose final desolation was usher'd by two very affecting Examples; One, That of an hundred Young-men whom they sent to *Delphos*, two onely returned, the rest being con-

sumed by Pestilence: the other, That the roof of the publick School-house fell so suddenly, that of an hundred and twenty Children but one escaped with life: Of which he saith, Ταῦτα μὴ σπὶ σπουδῇ ὁ Θεὸς ἐργάσας ἔστι· these Signs God fore-shewed their approaching fate and desolation withal. Now, with this so shallow and contracted a foundation, he ventures the building of this catholick Assertion, *Quoties ingentes, &c.* A thing not much to be wondred at, because where men are very fond of an assumed Principle, any single Example, which speaks favor for it, shall be more attended unto, then an hundred which disparage and refute it: Besides, one *Affirmative* (especially if plausible, as this is) doth far more affect and engage our minds, then many more evident *Negatives*; because these are infinite, disperse our sight, and deliver us to uncertainty.

2. It is no wonder at all to meet with such an Assertion amongst Heathens, and any little Accidents blown out, by a superstitious Fancy, into the shew and appearance of strange Omens, if we consider,

1. That they looked upon their Gods as a kind of *Fayries*, which would throw fire-brands and furies about the house for the omission of some petty criticisms in their Rites; and that therefore they gave forth frequent

frequent intimations of these impotencies and distasts. They thought they were lost with a trifle, and won again to a good Opinion of them by paying them some ἀμοιβὰς ἀγωνισμαί, uneouth adorations (as *Plutarch* styles them) the homage of a little crouching and circumstantial Devotion.

2. *The hopes and fortunes of the Heathens were laid up generally in this World, and therefore their fears in reference to it were easily awakened.* The Heathen *Cæcilius* truly acknowledged, That all the Religious Rites instituted by their Ancestors were levelled to no higher an end than the good of this lower life; being either intended as grateful returns to the Divine Bounty for some temporal favors received, or devout addresses to divert a feared, or appease a felt displeasure of the Deity: And therefore no wonder they were soon awakened into a great fear when any strange occurrence, of whose end and cause they were unresolved, fell before their notice, lest it should abode the running of that Vessel upon rocks, wherein their hopes and happiness were embarked. Men are apt to entertain great fears in reference to that wherein they apprehend themselves greatly concerned. Besides, the whole Ethnick Religion was nothing but a perpetual banishment of all true generoseness and freedom of mind; their peace fled

*Maiores nostros deprehendes initiassse ritus omnium religionum, vel ut remuneraretur Divina indulgentia, vel ut averteretur imminens ira, aut ut jam tumens placaretur.*  
Minut. Fel,

G 2

before

before the chirping of a Bird, and they were more *frighted* then the Hare which sometimes crost their way: any thing was an *Omen* with them;

Vid. Kir-  
cher. Obelisc.  
Pamph. l. 4.  
p. 318.

*Angimur, si sternutaverit, si male loquatur, Irascimur; si quis viderit insomnium valde Metuimus, si noctua clamaverit quæpiam, timemus.*

As *Meander* expresseth himself in the Person of the Heathens:

To the Testimony of the *Fathers*: I answer in general, That it were no wonder to find them (living so near the times of Gentilism) speaking in favor sometimes for some of the Doctrines thereof; the main trunk and body of the Gentile superstition was indeed hewn down in their minds, but still there was some small roots and fibres remaining, which are observed to spring up ever and anon, and trouble their Writings. But however, we shall (I believe) seldom find them expressing any great regard to this grand Doctrine of the Gentile Theology.

As for *Tertullian*, howsoever he may seem, like some carved images about houses, to support and grace our Adversaries building, yet he will prove in truth to be, like them, barely forc'd and fastned on, and to lend no strength at all thereunto: For,  
1. The Father writing to the Heathens  
there,



there, might lawfully discourse with them upon the common *hypothesis* of the Ethnick Theology; for they regarded those mighty *Vulcano's* as the Courts of *Pluto*, and a kind of testimony or fit emblem of the fires and vengeance in another state. 2. He stiles these fiery eruptions but *testimonium & exemplum*, a testimony and example of the Divine judgment, which in a lax sense he might well do, these seeming to be set forth by the Divine Wisdom, as Glasses and Pictures to convey to the duller World some weak images of the horrors of those everlasting burnings in another World. 3. These durable fires are alledged not as any signs of an everlasting burning, but as the best argument Nature afforded to prove the possibility of such a burning against the Sons of Nature, who thought a fire which neither consumes nor expires to be a great contradiction. And to a like purpose we find the very same instances alledged against them by another of the Ancients: *Sicut ignes fulminum corpora tangunt nec absument, sicut vigne Aetna & Vesuvii & ardentium ubique terrarum flagrant nec erogantur; ita poenale illud incendium non damnis ardentium pascitur, sed inexesa corporum laceratione nutritur.* Minut. Fel.

*Æstuat indefessis flammarum globis Aetna & Linculus & Vesuvius Campanus: & quo nobis iudicii perpetuitatem probent, dissiliunt, devorantur, nec ullis tamen seculis finiuntur.* Pacianus l. de poenit. & confess.

To the Testimony of S. Austin, I answer, 1. That strange occurrence by him

mentioned might possibly appear to him clothed in more significant circumstances then to us it doth; who cannot but look at the sudden *Mania* of so many Creatures but as the natural, though more unusual effect, which in those hotter Climates the unfitting season of the year might possibly have upon them. 2. He speaks but doubtfully thereof, *Hoc si signum fuit.* 3. But if our Adversaries appeal to *S. Austin*, to *S. Austin* shall they go: who (in his more awakened thoughts) thus delivereth himself in defiance of all such Ominous Observations;

*Monstra dicta sunt à Monstrando, quod, aliquid significando demonstrent, & Ostenta ab Ostendendo, Portenta à Portendendo, id est, præostendendo; & Prodigia, quod porro dicant, id est, futura prædicant. Sed viderint eorum conjectores quomodo ex iis sive fallantur, sive instinctu Spirituum (quibus cura est, tali pœna dignos animos hominum noxiæ curiositatis retibus implicare) vera prædicant, sive multa dicendo aliquando in aliquid veritatis incurrant.*

*S. August. De Civit. Dei, l. 28. c. 8.*

As for the Testimony of *Machiavel* alledged by *Dr. Jackson*, our Adversaries, and other Patrons of the Opinion I contend against, so little is his credit and reputation with many men, in matters especially of a religious concern, that perhaps it might suffice to return the *Jewish Proverb* upon our

our Adversary, *Fidejussor* turns *Fidejussore* eger. It will (I think) appear to the most of no great value in this Argument, if it be considered;

1. *Those Signs, which he hath noted in the same Chapter as the Precursors of some great Evils, are vain, beyond the visions of a Feaver, and the whispers of the wind:* for he there tells us, That the death of *Lorenzo de Medices*, the Founder of the Dukedom of *Tuscany* in his Family, was portended by the defacing of their great Temple in *Fla-rence* by fire from Heaven; and the Banishment of *Petrus Soderinus*, one of the Pillars of State, by the burning of the Senate-house by Lightning. [*Tenterden Steeple and Goodwin Sands!*] We may conclude by these wither'd and thin ears, that the whole harvest of his other Observations, he grounded his fore-mentioned speech upon, was little besides chaff and husk.

2. *The suspicion of Atheism renders him also not a little to the suspicion of Superstition.* The Heathens of old, stiled (*Ἀθεοὶ ὡς ἡγοῦντο*) Atheists in the World, were the most superstitious Observers of Prefages and Omens. They which live most in neglect of God, think they see tokens of a divine *Nemesis* in every strange accident they behold. Superstition and Atheism (like Water and Ice) produce one another; slavish and su-  
Ephes. 2. 12.

Levit. 26. 36.

Tul. de Nat.  
Deor. l. 3.  
c. 86.

perstitious fears of God leading to Atheism as their cure, and Atheism leading to greater fears of him as its deserved punishment. Of *Epicurus*, all whose Doctrines were level'd to the beating down of all fears of God or Death, *Tully* hath left this upon record, *Nec quenquam vidi, qui magis ea qua timenda esse negaret, timeret, Mortem dico & Deos*. It is a great justice, that that wickedness should be punished with false fears, which hath discarded the true. They which will not fear God, and Hell, and Sin, shall fear a Prodigy; being therein like the horse (to which they stand compared, *Jer.* 8. 6.) which will start at its own shadow, and yet rush furiously and without fear into the battel.

3. *Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.* The wheel of Providence is continually going over Kingdoms and Persons. The World, like Mount *Calvary*, presents us with nothing almost but Crosses, Deaths, and Spectacles of Misery; Heaven onely is a Kingdom that cannot be shaken: no wonder then if any unusual Accidents be soon seconded by some Tragedy or other, though never intended its Prologue and precedent Monitors. As the Philosopher therefore said upon another occasion, *Οὐ διὰ τὸ βαδίζειν ἤσπραπεν ἀλλὰ συνέβη τὸ τοιοῦτον*. It lightned, not because I walked, but it so hapned: so we may

may in the present case; Not because such a Comet appeared, such a Steeple was burnt with Lightning, such a strange Sight in the Air, or monstrous Birth was seen, therefore such a Princes death, War or Heresie ensued (as the Antitype thereof;) but that such a contexture and succession of Events was casual and without design. Upon occasion of this Objection, I cannot but further add, That it seems not much to raise the reputation of the vulgar Doctrine of Prodigies, that it is so much abetted by *Machiavel* and *Pomponatius*, commonly look'd at as two Atheists higher by the head and shoulders than the rest. How far *Machiavel* was addicted to the regard of them, even in the Ethnick latitude, will appear from a perusal of the fore-cited Chapter of his: And what *Pomponatius* (who intituled the Heavens to the Miracles and Religion of the *Messiah*) thought of them, let himself declare: *Discurrenti per omnes historias & antiquas & recentes, apparebit quantum corpora caelestia sollicita sint de Regibus, regnis, urbibus, & universaliter de magnis mutationibus: de quibus non solum quando fiunt & proxima sunt, dant ipsa corpora caelestia in caelo, in quatuor elementis, in bestiis, & in hominibus, diversa prodigia & signa, verum & per multa ante tempora, &c.* De Incantat. c. 12.

The Error (as I doubt not to stile it) of  
the



the reverend Dr. *Jackson* in this Argument may be easily pardoned, to his singular piety and learning; the light and lustre of which, like that of the Sun, may easily hide any of his spots and blemishes from the severer eyes and notices of the World. Great Minds, like the heavenly Bodies, though they are moved, for the main with the force of the *Primum Mobile*, the weight and evidence of Truth; yet they appear sometimes to have their *declinationes proprias*, some private motions and declinations of their own, to which their peculiar *Genius*, impressions from the Age, or their Education, may very fatally betray them. This Opinion of Prodigies, and signs of Events future (which the general strain of his Writings speaks his mind hugely possess and dy'd withal) I am ready to reckon amongst those *Idola specus*, false notions, which the black and melancholy Mansion, his excellent Soul appears to have dwelt in, did abuse his mind withal. Any Events extraordinary in the World, seem all along to have had a great impression upon his Soul, and seem expounded sometimes with a little more solemnity than their just value and moments will well warrant and allow. Melancholy is of a very impressive temper, and Poetick nature, and is apt (like a dark room) to receive in the images of objects without, in  
very

very monstrous and antick figures and representations: The <sup>a</sup> Greek Physician hath noted of Persons acted by it, that *εἰς δεισιδαιμονίαν περιστρέφονται*, they are easily turned to Superstition.

As for his *Book of Prodigies* mentioned, I profess my self not greatly tempted to follow its casual loss with any deep sighs; and that not onely because mens understandings have been too much undervalued by <sup>b</sup> Books of that nature, already extant to a number sufficient to a cure of the most troublesom curiosity in such inquiries; but,

1. *Because the few Prodigies and Signs of Times commended, with a great seriousness to our notices, in his Sermons on Luke* (taken for the most part out of *Herodotus, Livy, Valer. Max. and Machiavel*) will appear to any man, that doth not use to start at shadows, too thin and weak to bear up any such weighty & serious Conclusions, as he teacheth his Reader to build upon them, (the knowledg whereof I had rather should be owing to the Readers curiosity, then to my rehearsal.) Now I think we may make some judgment of the value of the whole piece, by the coarseness of a remnant thereof.

2. *Because it designed an Errorum Apotheosis*, a kind of consecration of the greatest part of the Errors and Follies of the Gentile Superstition; as appears in an high degree

<sup>a</sup> Aret. Cappadoc. c. de Melanc.

<sup>b</sup> Nehusius Fatidic. Sacr. l. 2. per tot. Joh. Polycar. his Tract. Tragic.

Camerar. de Ostent. Peucer. his Teratoscop.

Corn. Gemma de Nat. divinis Charect. l. 1. c. 6.

Ch. 13. 5. & c. 21. 25.

Pag. 16.

degree of probability from those words which fall from him in the fore-cited Papers; where (speaking of such kind of *Portenta* and Signs of Heaven, at which the Heathen used to be dismayed) he thus delivers himself: *Though to believe as much concerning the Signs of the Times as the Heathens did, though to make as good or better use of them then they did, be not sufficient to acquit us from ruine and destruction fore-signified; yet, not to believe as much as they did, not to make so good use as they did, not to be so much affected as they were, is enough and more then enough to condemn us, enough to bring that ruine and calamity, which they portend or fore-signifie, inevitably and in full measure upon us. A strange speech! What is this at best but to set Christians aurum colligere ex stercore (as Virgil said he did, when reading of Ennius) to gather the gold of devout fears, and Christian fore-sights, from the dung and dross of all the Ethnick Ostenta, and auspicious Observations, where-ever occurring? For my own part, were I under the Religion of any such Persuasion, That all strange Accidents are the Warnings of Heaven, I should conclude it a great service to God and the good of men, to exhort, as opportunity invited, the Christian Magistrate to institute some such Colledges as the Romans had (who received*

*Vid. Onuphri-  
um Panuin. de  
civ. Rom. tit.  
Augurum  
Collegium.*

received them all as the Signs of Heaven) which should profess themselves *Prodigiorum Interpretes*, and should be ready to offer to the World the most trusty Rules and Principles I were Master of, to manage their Interpretations so, that we might with some assurance conclude the intent and meaning of God in them. As for that good use the Heathens made of these things (wherein they are recommended to our imitation) what was it? Did they not receive any strange Accidents as the Indications whence to proceed to a *Crisis* of Times, and to put a difference between lucky or inauspicious hours and days? (as if any Times were delivered out of the thoughts and regards of Heaven.) Did they not use, upon any prodigious Event, to consult those *λόγια* ἰδύς, the Devils Oracles (a matter pardonable to their *hypothesis*) to understand the intent and meaning of the *Gods* in them? Did they not approach the Altars of their angry Deities in a nicer Observation of all the Criticisms of Superstition, and the Arbitrary Injunctions of their Religion? Did they not sometimes hold up some other devoted Person to bear off that unlucky blow, which the *Omen* told them was level'd at their own heads by their touchy Deities? For so *Suetonius* tells us, That *Nero*, to secure himself from the envious Aspect of a Comet

Sueton. in vit.  
Ner. Cæs.

met then appearing, attempted the death of some of his Nobles, as having learn'd *Solere Reges talia Offenta caede aliqua illustri expiare; & à semet in capita procerum depellere.* Did they not increase to such a body and bulk at last, as to disturb the Peace of common life, where observed and retained, and to work some men to a discarding of all thoughts of Religion and a Deity, as a kind of *Furies* perpetually haunting their inward house, and bereaving them of all true generousness, peace and freedom of spirit? But where do we ever find that these pretended Alarms from Heaven did awaken men out of that profound sleep, which in the darker times of Gentilism they were fallen into; and perswade them, or any others, into a correction of their lives and manners? To return:

Exod. 32. 16.

3. *Because such Signs as these are supposed to be, appear greatly unworthy the Majesty, Wisdom and Goodness of God.* That Scripture might appear to be מכתב אלהים (in the language of Moses) *the Writing of God*, he hath been pleased to imprint such characters of Divinity both upon the *matter* and *style* thereof, that those weak prenotions we have of infinite Wisdom, Goodness, Majesty, do attest and bear witness to it, as worthy and befitting God. And surely, were these Prodigies intended Διὸς Κήρυκες, the Heralds of Heaven,



Heaven, there would appear in them, to severe and knowing Persons, somewhat able to fill out their name and title, somewhat correspondent to those anticipations which the Soul of Man hath of what is becoming the Wisdom, Majesty, and Holiness of God. For as God cannot be loved but by appearing before the Soul big with what-ever he hath framed it to imbrace, and open it self unto; so neither can he be revered and observed, but in such displays of himself, which he knows the Soul apt to receive with the most awful expressions of observance and regard.

Now then, what man, that hath any great thoughts of the Majesty, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, can once imagine he ever intended any base and deformed Monsters the Interpreters of any of his great Counsels and Purposes? Did God generally, under the weak and worldly state of the *Jewish Church*, send forth those Prophets, whose *learning, education, holy lives, great works, admirable gifts*, commanded even profane men to a reverence of their Persons and Message; and doth he now make use of *Monsters, Comets, Meteors*, or the Apparitions of unclean spirits, as his *Praeones publici*? Can we ever think that the wise God would have men to understand his meaning, when speaking to them by Signs, which,  
like

*Meā causā me  
mones quod  
non intelligā?  
quid me igi-  
tur mones?  
Tul. l. 2. de  
Divin.*

*Eccles. Hist.  
l. 3. c. 11.*

*1 Joh. 3. 21.*

like Pictures, look to any way, speak to any sense and purpose, the differing fancies of men please? or that he speaks to men, like the old Ethnick Idols, by mystical nods and becks? All the Signs God ever spake to men by, gave forth (either by their own nature, or his own exposition) λόγον ὁσση-  
μόν, a significant speech: the Wonders in Egypt, the Rites of the Passover, the Elements in the Sacrament, are all *Signa vocalia*; and the Signs and Wonders, which, as commonly thought, were Gods Trumpets, before he fell upon *Jerusalem*, were all (to speak with *Eusebius*) ἐνεργῇ καὶ θεωρημα-  
τικῇ μέλλουσιν ἐρημίαν πρᾶττα, *Wonders big with energy, and clearly significative of the approaching Desolation*. Besides, can it be imagined that infinite Goodness, having appointed us a Religion, pregnant with Contemplations fit to entertain an *Angel*, levelled to the lifting up of the spirits of men to *that way of life which is above*, that comes forth to give us παρρησίαν πρὸς Θεόν, freedom of speech and approach unto God, and to chase before it all those pale fears and jealousies of himself (the dreadful Apparitions which astonish'd men heretofore while sitting in darkness and the shadow of death) should now task us to a devout Observation of the familiar miscarriages of Nature in one kind or other, and to debase our selves to the

the bondage of some blind and confused fears of his vengeance, upon the news of a Monster, some ludicrous pranks of vile Spirits, or a fiery Exhalation?

Upon an account of the Premises, were I inclined to an Observation of *Omens* and *Prodigies*, I should (as *Prodigies* use to be differently interpreted) make an inverted use of the words of the *Reverend Publisher* of this Great Authors works; [*Reader, write this a Prodigy, That this Treatise alone concerning Prodigies should be lost, and that in the Authors life-time,*] and conclude, That God, in favor to the understandings of men, provided, that, like the dead body of *Moses*, it should lie buried, none knowing where, that so it might not be made an *Idol* of, which perhaps the Reverence of so great a Name might have inclined some unto.

*In Præfat.  
suprà laudat.*

I should not have spoken so much, not to his, but my own prejudice, of so Reverend a Person, but that I am desirous to cut off all the locks, wherein I can but conceive the strength of this superstitious Perswasion may lie, which (as weeds do by good ground) tends but to eat out the heart and strength of that devout fear, from which it seems to spring.

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SECT.

## SECT. V.

*An Answer to the Objection fetch'd from Experience.*

The Objection proceeding upon the credit of Experience proposed: further confirmed from *Lucan, Pliny, the French History, Others.* The Plea evinc'd; 1. Unsafe: opening a door for all the ancient Ethnick ways of Divination, especially by Dreams. *Artemidorus.* The Contenders for Prodigies commonly zealous for all sorts and kinds of them. *Pomponatius and Nehusius* noted to this purpose. 2. False: by Experience of former Times and our own. Men prone to conclude catholick Maxims from a few Examples, with the reason thereof. 3. Fallacious, upon many accounts. Some Prodigies mentioned in History originally Apologues. The Prodigies related by *Lucan* and *Virgil*, of what moment: the power of a perverse Faith to bring an evil, noted from *Geisoh.* A judgment upon *Vespasian* his slighting a Comet, which shone in his time. The Argument from Experience of no force, though granted true, and why. The danger of being led by Experience without Rule, shewn from *Maimonides* and Reason.

THirdly, It is further opposed, That common Experience (the surest Corrector of all Idol Notions and hasty Reasonings) seems to support this Perswasion concerning Prodigies. They have always been known succeeded by great evils, and those generally such as they seemed the most natural Symbols and representations of. *Lucan*, speaking of the Tragedies of *Pompey's* fall, and the changes consequent thereunto, describes them ushered by the direful Prologues of many prodigious alterations

Utut se res ha-  
beat, experi-  
entia certe  
compertum  
habemus, talia  
signa sequi so-  
lere magnos  
aliquos motus.  
*Machiav.*  
*Disput. l. 1.*  
c. 56.

iterations in the face of the Creation:

———*addita fati*

*Pejoris, manifesta fides, Superique minaces  
Prodigiis terras implerunt, aethera, pontum, Lucan. Phars.  
sal. l. 1.  
Ignota obscura viderunt sydera noctes,  
Ardentemq; polum flammis, caeloq; volantes  
Obliquas per inane faces, crinemq; tremendi  
Syderis, & terris mutantem regna Cometen,  
&c.*

Which words, because the Objection is a little concerned in them, I shall crave leave of the more serious Reader thus to paraphrase upon them:

*Nature miscarries with a fright, and starts  
Quite out of order, in her several parts  
At fates foreseen: new Stars shone in the skies,  
(The Torches to attend his Obsequies)  
Nature was backward rung, whilst heav'nly ire  
Had set the very Firmament on fire.  
A curled Star appear'd, and Mortals quake,  
Whose fear had turn'd each hair into a Snake.  
A burning Comet did sad fates portend,  
Heaven Kingdoms sells by such a candles end.*

And the Poet goes on there to give in such a catalogue of amazing Accidents, which I think will hardly obtain the Readers pardon, much less his faith, but by extending his Patent of *Poetica licentia* beyond a bare liberty in reference to the quantity of his



*a Cometes an-* words. *a* Besides, Experience hath long as-  
*recessit exitus* sured the World, that Heaven never light-  
*(Dionis fide)* ed up any of those unusual candles *Comets*,  
*Claudii, Vi-* but upon an approaching night of misery to  
*zellii, Didii,* a State, by Wars, the death of Princes, or  
*Juliani, Se-* Plagues, &c. The Comet *An. 1618.* was  
*veri, Macrini,* followed with an *Iliad* of Evils in *Germany*,  
*quibus adde* over which it seemed more directly impen-  
*Car. 5. Mat-* dent. *b Pliny* (speaking of Earthquakes)  
*thiam & An-* proposeth it as of universal observation,  
*nam Reginam* *Nunquam urbs Romana tremuit, &c.* Never  
*M. Brit.* did the City of *Rome* tremble by an Earth-  
*Nunc. Pro-* quake, but Events proved it a Presage of  
*phet. p. 22.* great mischiefs to ensue: and the *c French*  
*b Plin. Nat.* History records several strange Events in  
*Hist. l. 2. c. 84.* Nature precedaneous to the Assassination of  
*Henry the fourth of France.*

*c Histoire de*  
*Henry le*  
*Grand, p. 585.*  
*in octav.*

I answer, 1. *This Plea is very unsafe*; in  
 regard it can hardly (like besieged men)  
 open a gate to let in those it favors, but a  
 great troop of enemies to all sobriety will  
 croud in after: All the follies of Observa-  
 tion of Dreams, Predictions by the Stars,  
 Divination by Inspection of Beasts, Augu-  
 ries, pretending to be the Dictates of long  
 Experience, and of Tradition, handed to the  
 World from the very first times thereof.  
 Thus he in *d Tully* attempts the justification  
 of the Observation of all the *Auspicia*,  
 Presages by the Intrails of the Sacrifices,  
 Dreams, &c. saying, *Hæc auspicia, ostenta,*

*d Tull. de*  
*Divin. l. 1.*

*veteres*

*veteres rerum magis eventis moniti, quam ratione ducti probaverunt:* And <sup>e</sup> *Artemido-* <sup>c L. Oneiro-</sup>  
*rus* tells his Reader, That he doubted not ef- <sup>critic. pref.</sup>  
fectually to reprehend all the Deniers of any  
Divination by Dreams, *φέρων εἰς μέσον καὶ τῶν*  
*τῶν ὀπτελεσμάτων μαρτυρίαν,* by bringing  
*before them the evident testimony of Events*  
*succeeding:* And <sup>f</sup> *elsewhere* tells us, That he <sup>f Lib. 4. cap. 1,</sup>  
hath sufficiently assured the Art of inter-  
preting Dreams, because *ὃ ψιλῇ, ἐκασία, ἀλλ'*  
*ἢ πείρᾳ καὶ ταῖς τῶν ἀποτελεσμάτων μαρτυρίαις*  
*πειδωμένῳ.* <sup>g</sup> *not trusting to some weak Simi-*  
*litudes, but to Experience, and the steady te-*  
*stimony of Events:* So that men must be  
fore'd to quit this Argument as concluding  
nothing, for fear it conclude any thing. But  
I perceive this *dart is counted as stubble* by <sup>Job 41. 29.</sup>  
our Adversaries, and they are ready to *laugh*  
*at the shaking of this spear,* looking at it as  
a great service to God, and the common  
good, to regard any odd Occurrences what-  
soever as Presages and ominous, which seem  
to have the credit of Experience to recom-  
mend their observation: Thus <sup>g</sup> *Pompona-* <sup>g De Incantat.</sup>  
*tius* expresly; *Dicimus Deum curam geren-* <sup>c. 10.</sup>  
*tem humani generis, non solum Oraculis &*  
*Prodigiis, genus humanum admonere, verum*  
*& auguriis & ominibus:* And <sup>h</sup> *late Wri-* <sup>h Edon. Nebuf,</sup>  
ter calls men to an observation of all kind of <sup>l. 2. Fatid. Sag,</sup>  
*(Divine Types, as he styles them) Dreams,* <sup>pen. tit.</sup>  
*Prodigies of all kinds in the four Elements,*  

H 3                      prodigious

prodigious Tempests, Earthquakes, Inundations, Breakings forth of strange Fires, monstrous Births, all kind of Monstrosities in Stones, Metals, Floods, Fatidical Voices delivered by none knows whom, Apparitions of Ghosts, Ominations by Words, Names, Places, Times, in so many several Chapters full of elaborate vanity, and all under the specious and inviting title of *Fatidica Sacra*.

I add therefore secondly, *This Plea is very false*; for there have hapned many deaths of Princes never honored with the solemnity of any precedent *Comet*, or other object of wonder; and many Comets which never seemed to blast the Affairs of the World, by any envious and malignant Aspect thereupon. Almost four years and an half are past from us, since the Nation was first alarm'd with the dreadful news of strange Sights in Heaven and Earth, and yet (with all due thankfulness to God be it spoken) never did those three National Felicities, *Peace, Health, Plenty*, more bless our habitations in any much longer period of time: so that we have almost seen the *Annus mirabilis* happily refuted by a *Seculum mirabile*. The cause of mistake here is, that when folly hath often shot its bolt, and casually hit the mark (the Event seeming to smile upon and commend its Presages) there is a mighty

*Quando fuit  
quod trium  
quatuorve an-  
norum spatio,  
non Rex ali-  
quis; Magnus  
Dux aut Prin-  
ceps mortuus  
fuit? Obiit M.  
Rex Philip-  
pus Imp. Ser.  
Hisp. Regina  
proles ejus  
Gallia Rex,  
Seren. Maxi-  
mil. à quo  
Cometa? nul-  
lus apparuit  
certe, si appa-  
ruisset, miser  
Cometa homi-  
nidiorum om-  
nium reus fu-  
isset. Fien. de  
Com. p. 39.*

mighty notice taken thereof; and that especially because, as it is well noted by the<sup>k</sup> Lord BACON, *Natura intellectus humani, magis afficitur affirmativis & activis, quam negativis & privativis*: And accordingly, where a Rule or Observation holds, or hits in some one, it makes a more lively impression then the failing thereof in an hundred instances; that which is, as he well observes, *Omnis superstitionis & vana credulitatis radix*, The root of all Superstition and vain credulity in Astrology, Dreams, Omens, Prodigies, &c. When men see so little jarring between Events, and Prophecies Dreams or Prodigies, the pretended Presages of them, they conceive it very natural to conclude there was some hand of Art and counsel which tuned them to so marvelous an harmony and correspondence; and that on purpose to invite men to attend, and for the future to meet such strange Examples with serious and devout thoughts: whereas it were in truth a greater marvel if those (though)

<sup>k</sup> De Augm. Scient. l. 5. c. 4.

Non tanta est infelicitas Aruspicum, ut ne casu quidem unquam fiat quod illi verum esse prædixerunt. Tul. l. 2. de Divin.

Prophetick Wonders or Speeches, Onely

the Mind is apt to entertain great Opinions and a lasting Memory of such Objects as strike upon it strongly and unawares, as all kind of pretty Equalities and Uniformities, especially between Signs and Events, use to do : and besides, any great Evils (like some harsher Passages in Musick) make deep impressions on our Memories, and are generally made use of as a kind of little *Epochas* in life, whence to compute our Times ; while great and easie Blessings slide off from our minds, and are soon delivered to silence and forgetfulness : or else such prodigious Accidents would soon appear to *prophecie* (if at all) as oft *smooth* as harsh and *evil things* concerning us.

Thirdly, (*Nam pluribus exceptionibus uti, nemo prohibetur,*) This Plea is at best but *very fallacious and uncertain* ; and that upon many accounts :

1. *As many and great Evils have been consequent to Prodigies ; so also are they to many and great Evils :* There is a perpetual circulation of Prodigies Signal and Penal : The World is acquainted with any thing better then consistence ; its nature seems emblem'd in its figure, it is round, and accordingly in perpetual motion, and turning from one side, state, and condition, to another. And therefore, as the Disciples said to our Savior (in that great croud, *Luk. 8. 45.*)  
when



when demanding who touched him, *Seeſt thou the multitude thronging thee, and ſayſt thou, Who toucheth me?* ſo ſay I, when we ſee ſuch a multitude of Changes and Evils in the World, thronging of Prodigies before and after, ſhall we be ſo vain as to ask, what Perſons death, or what Event is touched upon, and pointed unto, in their meaning and ſignification?

2. *This Plea builds upon a moſt unfaithful and ſinking foundation, viz. the credit of all thoſe Prodigious Narrations which Books and common diſcourſe are ſtufft out withal; which will ſhrink to a very mean account, if held to the fire, ſearch'd into by a ſevere examination. There is a natural vanity in ſome Perſons to pretend to nothing beneath Extraordinary, and to relate no ſtory which ſhall not a little taſk mens Faith to gratifie their Fancy: this humor in Hiſtorians hath made the body of ancient Hiſtory in ſome parts ſo gouty and monſtrous; Οἱ ῥέντες ὡς ἐπὶ χυμὼδες λέγουσιν, τὸ μὲν ἡδὲ τῆς ἀκροάσεως αὐτοὶ καρπώσονται, (as Herodian ſaith of them;) They truſting that if they delivered ſomething fabulous and antick, they ſhould reap the ſweet fruit of ſo delightful a Narration in the wonder and acceptance of the People: being otherwiſe conſcious, λαδοίεν εἰς τὸν πολὺν ὄμιλον ἀεθμύμενοι, that they had lain obſcured, huddled up in the common talk*

Herod. hiſt.  
in Proem.

*Quidam in-  
credibilium  
relatu, com-  
mendationem  
parant, & Le-  
ctorem aliud  
acturum si per  
quotidiana  
ducere, mi-  
raculo exci-  
tant. Quidam  
creduli, qui-  
dam negli-  
gentes, qui-  
busdam men-  
daciis obre-  
pit, quibus-  
dam placet.  
Sen. Nat.  
Quest. l. 7.  
c. 16.*

*Lib. 7. c. 57.*

*Virg. Georg.  
l. 1. sub fin.*

*talk of the Many.* As long as the leaves of Books present the eyes and minds of Men with antick Pictures and Stories, they will be gazed upon. We have even naturally a very prone faith and fancy for such kind of Relations as these; for our minds finding themselves too great and large to be contentedly entertained with the dry and scanty contemplation of things little and vulgar, do readily encourage the relations of things new and rare, and that have some touches and umbrages of more wonderful and magnificent, then this *σχημα τῆς ἡρμῆς* common Scene of the World can present them with. Again, some of these recorded Prodigies were in all likelihood *Apologues* at first, translated in time by the easie multitude into the repute of real Histories: That of *a Mare bringing forth an Hare*, recorded by *Herodotus* as a Prodigy presaging the overthrow of *Xerxes* his great Army, was no doubt the defeat of that Army (appearing to the eye at first in the strength and pride of an Horse, but concluding in the fears and flight of an Hare) related originally in a Parable. As for the many Prodigies related by Heathen Poets *Lucan, Virgil, as also Ovid*) it shall suffice in this place to return, That they are related by Heathen Poets: *By Heathen*] whose misery it was, by the subtilty of the Devil and their Priests, to be abused with

with the faith of a great many vainly reputed or falsely reported Prodigies; *By Poets* whose priviledg it is, without the reproach of a lye, ingeniously to abuse their Readers with the relation of things (apt to move wonder, and raise affection) never acted but upon the stage of imagination. *Strabo* notes that the Ancient Poets used to put into their Poems *το θαυμαστόν καὶ προδεδεικμένον*, *some-what wonderful and prodigious*; any such things being *ἐν τῷ μυθώδει φιλῶντες*, *a kind of love-potion to induce an affection to learning* (and to themselves) in that rude and childish Age.

Ovid. Met.  
l. 15. sub fin.

Geograph. l. 1.

3. God may possibly sometimes in judgment bring an evil upon men, but falsely conceived presaged by a Prodigy. It is not unlikely, that the Evils thought portended by Prodigies are often consequent to them, because God will punish, as in some, a superstitious credulity, and timorous distrust of his Providence; so, in others, a bold and blind neglect thereof, exprest in a scornful rejection of any such supposed signs and intimations of a Divine displeasure. Many times *imaginatio facit casum*, the distrustful Opinion conceiv'd of a Prophecy, Dream, or Prodigy, brings the Event, and not any appointed significancy of either. God sometimes chooseth mens delusions, and brings their own fears upon them; permits the

Excessus fiducia, res ut prospera, ita semper infelix.  
Verul. De Aug. Sci. l. 8.

Isai. 66. 4.

Omen

Joh. Gerson.  
contra super-  
stit. dierum  
observat.

Omen to succeed according to their easie jealousies, and some great Evil to befall them upon such a day or hour, (*unhappy*, onely because abused by their superstitious and soft imaginations :) For (as Gerson well) *Sicut vera & Christiana fides mirabilia operatur in bene credentibus, sic & falsa & mala credulitas Deo permittente eventus malos operatur, vel potius demeretur.* A perverse Faith will produce perverse Wonders: And as pregnant a womb of Evils is the neglect of any such Prodigies, when founded onely in a *Giant-like mind* (as some Copies read it, *Ecclus. 23. 4.*) apt to bid defiance to God in what ways soever he display himself. Superstition oft brings the Evils it fears, and Atheism the Evils it flights; for Divine Providence justly reacheth not its wings to those Persons which either distrust it by vain fears, or dare and challenge it by bold and ignorant hopes.

That which may possibly pass with some for no rash example to abet this Assertion, is the instance of *Vespasian's* death, of whom it is recorded, that when notice was given him of a Comet then appearing as a Presage of his death, He bad the Relaters to deliver this message to the King of *Parthia*, to whom they were Retainers, *Ille comatus, ego autem calvus*; meaning, that seeing that King wore long hair, it seemed most probable,

bable, that this *stella crinita* (as the Romans called it) did portend his death rather than the Emperor *Vespasian* who was bald : But the Emperor died before the extinction of this Comet, and that King survived both. Now though I incline not (with that reverend Person) to attribute his sudden death to a disregard of this Prodigy *as his summons to the Divine Tribunal*, (for how could he possibly understand it to be such?) yet to conclude this profane neglect of a matter, then supposed religious and sacred, to have influenced his death, is, perhaps, neither to be uncharitable nor superstitious. [I question not the truth of, at least some of, those Observations the Heathens made of a Divine *Nemesis*, often asserting the honor of Religion by avenging the neglect and scorn of their (though) superstitious Rites upon Principles of Atheism.] Otherwise, had that speech of the Emperor been the issue of a duly informed judgment, it had been, for the matter, as allowable a Sarcasm, as that therewith *Elijah* reprehended the Religion of the Image of *Baal*. So then, till our Adversaries can prove a greater *safety, truth* and *faithfulness* in this Argument, their cause will be very little assured and established by it.

But lest I be thought uncivil, by tasking them to an impossibility; to ease them, I shall

*Vid. Sueton. in Vespas.*

*Dr. Jackson Serm. on Luk. 13.5.*

*Wild. 14.29. 30.*

*Vid. Valer.*

*Max. de Relig. neglect.*

*c.1. & de Prodig. c.6.*



shall suppose for the present somewhat more of truth and faithfulness therein than I am willing to grant; but even then, except it be made appear withal that all these strange instances in Nature are signs of divine efficiency and appointment, for ought I know we should but offer the sacrifice of fools, while receiving them as the great instruments of Religion, the warnings of Providence, as *Biblia Laicorum*, the Books in which the men of a more dull and heavy sense might read the purposes of wrath, and the images of an approaching judgment. The Devils Oracles were sometimes credited by experience of Events, (or else no doubt he had not had so much custom,) were they therefore divine Manifesto's? Some kind of *Hebrew* words, written and worn about the body, have been succeeded by strange alterations therein; shall we therefore conclude (as some have done) that the Word of Gods Blessing is as much affixed to them to cure, as to meat and drink to nourish the body? *Maimonides* tells us, that the application of any thing, or the use of any Rite, for the production of any effect in Plants or Bodies, where Reason cannot discover the least shadow of any natural connexion between Cause and Effect, their Masters used to stile *Viam Amorrahorum*, the way of the Amorites, thought to be interdicted,

*Vid. Crollium  
in Praef. ad  
Basilic. Chi-  
mic.*

*More Nevoc.  
Part. 3. c. 37.*

terdicted, *Levit.* 18. 3. and 20. 23. Sure I am, An attendance to Experience, without some Rules of Reason or Revelation to assure us, is *Via Ethnicorum, the way of the Heathens*, in which they walked to a justification of most of their religious Vanities: we are here out of Gods way, and we do but tempt the Tempter to put eternal fallacies upon us, and to amuze and scare us with one Prodigy or other perpetually, as he did the Heathens. Experience is then alone a proper Guide, when it hath the eye of Revelation, or some steady Principle of Reason, to credit and conduct it: without that, it is a blind, confused, infinite, giddy thing.

To all that hath been said, I further add, that I doubt not but, as many pretended Prophecies, so many prodigious Relations were set together after some great Event; and that Writers (to make the recorded Prodigy the more worthy of a great Opinion) have been easily tempted to blow out with their quills a lean and lank occurrence, and by the addition of some odd circumstances to swell it out to a very monstrous and frightful shew. Besides, there is not a Year but, in the compass of a Kingdom, will present a curious Observer with an hundred Singularities, which presented in one intire view (like Trees combined in a Grove) will give a very sacred and solemn Aspect, and charm

charm a soft and childish imagination into a strong perswasion of their being divine Monitors of the Vengeance which they see en-

\* *Ἀνέπειθε αὐτὸν [Σέβον] ὀνείρατα* Dreams, Oracles, *καὶ ὅσα εἰς ἀεὶ γινώσκων τῶν χρησμοῖτε καὶ μελλονῶν σύμβολα φαίνεται*, and what ever *ὅσα, &c. ἃ φάντα ἀληθῆ* seem prophetick Symbols to men, are thought *ὅτι καὶ ἀληθῆ* to have nothing of falshood or forgery lodged *τότε περὶ ἐν* in them, when ever they have the luck to hit, *ὅταν εἰς πλὴν ἀπόλασιν ἐντυχῇ.* and to seem fulfilled.

And thus, I hope, I have cut off the head of this *Goliath*-Argument, which appeared to defie all that ever could be opposed unto it.

Herodian, l. 2.  
Ἰελαίν.

## SECT. VI.

*An Answer to the Objections proceeding upon the more immediate Principles of Reason.*

The first Objection, God must be supposed to warn before He strike : Answered in several particulars. The Rational intimations of a Judgment, what. Second Objection, That the disparaging of this Opinion of Prodigies weakens the Faith of a Divine Providence : Answered : the Opinion evinc'd rather to invalidate the Article. Third Objection, It appears not to what end they can minister, but that of Prelages. The weakness of this Objection noted : the alledging of this end proved vain by assigning ends more valuable and excellent : viz. 1. They may serve to awaken more gross and heavy minds into a sense of the Being, Providence, and Greatness of the God of Nature : the irregularities in Nature and the Uniformities

formities of Providence very serviceable to the sense of a God. 2. The petty alterations in Nature serve as types and assurances of the great and final Alteration thereof. 3. The Soul of Man is supplied in them with Objects it was made most apt and ready to contemplate. Men of all tempers have somewhat suitable in Nature to entertain them. 4. They discover the evil effect of Sin even upon the frame of Nature. The cause of the Vanity noted in the Creation not understood by the Heathens. 5. They lead to an understanding of several mysteries in Nature. Prodigies, the occasions of Philosophy, and the assistants. 6. To a right notion also of the Laws of Nature. 7. The Exorbitances in Nature foil and set off the more beautiful and regular Productions thereof. Fourth Objection, The Monstrosities in Nature can be intitled but to the immediate Power of God; and if so, onely that they may be signs and tokens to the World. Answered: by Concession of the necessity of a general assistance of the Divine Power to Nature; with the Reason thereof. This proved not to take away a native power and sufficiency in second Causes. Instincts, first Principles of Motion in Animals, and the Plastick power, hard to explain. Plotinus. The power of Nature disturbed, the cause of irregular effects: the great vanity of giving more serious regards to the Monstrosities then the Uniformities of Nature, noted. Aristotle commended; his Opinion in reference to Providence noted from Maimonides.

**T**He next Objections which expect our Answer, proceed upon the more immediate Principles of Reason: whereof the first is this;

*It seems greatly to jumble the notions of Goodness and Justice in God, to believe he warns not before he strikes: now what warnings more proper and proportioned to their end, then Prodigies, which speak to the senses, and so are most likely to make the duller multitude start and reflect? There* Object. 1.

Luk. 19. 41.  
Jer. 50. 27.

*Amat benignitas Numinis seu quod merentur homines, seu quod tangitur eorum affectione, his quoque rationibus [prodigiis] prodere quæ impendent.*  
Ammian.  
Marcel. l. 21.

*Solut.*

2 King. 22.  
17. & c. 23.

are some *καὶ ποὶ ἑμισησῶναι καὶ ἐνδυνάσας* times of visitation and vengeance, times wherein the cup of vengeance in the hand of God is become brim-full, and ready to run over, when his *repentings* are come to an end, when his three Worthies, *Noah, Daniel and Job*, should not prevail for the pardon or reprieve of a condemned Nation. Now then surely it is but reasonable to presume that infinite Goodness hath so provided that there should be some signs of such times, that the repentance of good men might, at least, break the fall of that *talent of Lead*, which it cannot altogether prevent: surely an Earthquake would now be a seasonable Monitor, and (like a shaking before a burning fit) be a very significant fore-runner of some fiery indignation shortly to break forth.

I answer, 1. *Such warnings, if given, would not work so kindly upon the ill-natur'd World, as it is presumed:* for some evil men would, like vermine, soon quit that house, that Nation, of whose sudden ruins they had such sure Prefages; and others would fight against Heaven the more desperately, as expecting no quarter from it; few would express the good spirit of *Josiah*, who though he knew that evil was determined upon *Jerusalem*, yet reformed he with all his might. We see that God often warns men by his lighter afflictions: The language of his lesser judgments



judgments is, *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.* He usually scrapes the infected house, before *one stone be not left upon another*, and makes the corrections of his *rods* Monitors of his approaching *scorpions*: Now it is seldom these reach their intended ends, much less would a Prodigy. We have already the terrible threatnings contained in Scripture, the frequent disciplines of Gods Rod, and (*aliena pericula*) the great examples of divine justice, in his Word, alway presented to our fear and caution: and would they, which regard not the thunders of these, ever be much moved with the squibs of a few Prodigies? None greater expectants of Signs from Heaven then the *Jews*; but when God gave them and others *fearful sights and great signs from Heaven*, none so stupidly regardless and inobservant. Luk. 21. 11.

2. *There are other kind of Prodigies, by which wise men may receive more certain notices of an approaching Evil in a State.* As there is a *natural Divination*, whereby the Birds can preface an approaching storm and tempest, (that which gave birth to the Opinion, that they were *Divorum interpretes*;) so there is an *artificial one*, appropriate to every Art and Mystery almost. The *Physician* hath his *Prognosticks* of Death, the *Natural Philosopher* his Prefages of Winds and Seasons, the *Mariner* of Storms and Calms;

Virgil. Georg.  
l. 1.

Calms; the *Husbandman* many of fruitfulness and plenty, elegantly described by the Poet: so also the prudent States-man hath his Prospective of many rational signs, by which he can spy a trouble and change in the State, as yet a great way off:

--- Ille etiam cecos instare tumultus  
Sæpe monet, fraudesque & operta tumescere  
bella.

Such had that Politician, who, upon a view of the maners of the City where he came, brake out, *O urbem venalem & cito perituram, si emptorem invenerit!*

Ezek. 22. 15.

Now the Signs and Prodigies which thus fore-warn him, are such as these: 1. *Monsters of Vices and Opinions* generally obtaining in a State. When the *old man* is grown too big for the girdle of shame or fear, and the hand of publick Justice neglects to rub off that rust which is growing upon the Iron Age, it may quickly be expected that God should do his own work himself, assert his own righteousness, by throwing it into the fire of some terrible judgment, to refine and purifie it. So also, such monstrous Doctrines as these, grown bold and publick, are a Pre-  
face of some great distempers growing upon the common Body; *That there are some inward and extraordinary Calls to an Office, which ow an account of their truth and reality soly to that spirit which feels them: That*  
only

*only Christ in Person is the lawful and rightful Governor of the Earth: That Magistracy stands not with Christian liberty: That Nullus est Dominus Civilis dum est in peccato mortali: Where the Magistrate will not reform the Church, the People may: That to comply with such counsels as the present bent of Mind within, and Dispensation without, suggest and encourage, is to follow God.* Every such Doctrine, as dull and wooden as it may seem, contains (like the Trojan horse) armed men in the belly thereof.

2. *Extraordinary Eclipses of the superior Luminaries, the Governors in Church and State, either as to the light of wisdom and counsel, or respect and reverence before the People. Before Gods petty day of Judgment in a State, the Sun usually is turned* Hof. 9. 7. *into darknes, and the Moon into blood: there* Ila. 19. 11, 24. is great contempt thrown upon the Person or Government of the Ruler, by libels and seditious speeches, and his chief Ministers are required as sacrifices to appease some popular fury and discontent.

3. *Earthquakes in divers places: I mean, a great many commotions and petty tumults among the Populacy: These argue high dissatisfactions. Such frequent breakings out in the Body Politick are indications of many noxious and dangerous humors therein, which, without the wise interpose of State-*

Physicians, preface ruine to the whole. These and more Signs (not proper for this place) are there, which are sufficient to the Mind that hath wisdom: as for Folly, it would not receive instruction, though *one arose from the dead.*

**Objekt. 2.**

*Secondly,* It is further opposed, That the removal of this received Opinion of Prodigies and Signs, is the removing of a main Pillar, whereupon standeth the Faith of a Divine Providence, of a God concerned in, and observant of all the Affairs of the World, and evil Maners of Men: and that hereby we break off a great seal and assurance of the Divine Prescience, That no *Evils rise up out of the dust*, but come to pass *τῇ, ὠριμένην, βουλῇ, καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ Θεοῦ, Acts 2. 23.* by the counsel and foreknowledge of God determined to this particular object, and issue of time. And by consequence we hereby strengthen the hands of Atheism, and few pillows under the elbows of secure and sleepy wickedness.

I answer; Admit the common notion of  
Prodigies as God's Signs, serviceable to this  
end as it is pretended; yet, while devoid of  
truth, I may return the excellent words of  
*Job* upon the Objectors; *Will you speak  
wickedly for God? and talk deceitfully for  
him? will ye accept his person? Will you  
serve Truth it self with a lie? will you  
break*

*Hic [Spectris,  
Ostentis, Pro-  
digiiis] ostendit  
Deus, nihil tem-  
erè fieri, sed  
vitam, mortē,  
res secundas  
& adversas  
in manu Dei  
positas esse,  
&c. Lavat.  
De Spectris,  
p. 2. c. 3.*

Job 13.7.

break his commands to do him a courtesie? Perhaps God would not have his Providence and Prescience stand in so clear a light, that our *faith* thereof *might be found* the more *unto praise*, while receiving it upon the credit of Reason and Scripture, without any such testimony of our sense. Nor would the Opinion of *Prodigies* prove so effectual an Antidote against the poison of Atheism as it is supposed: for who greater Observers of them then *Machiavel* and *Pomponatius*, commonly reputed the Heads, one of the Political, and the other of the Philosophical Atheists? If an Atheist can believe that the World came by chance into all this beauty and elegant order, and the several spheres of Beings maintain so grateful an harmony in their motions, without some great Intelligence to give law and measure to them; He will more easily perswade himself, that things run by chance sometimes into discord, monstrosity and deformity, Nay further, it is rather the way to make men Atheists, to tell them, these are Gods Signs of things which they see seldom or never come to pass: And therefore it is safer to quit this way of proof: for all Arguments brought in defence of a Truth men are willing to free their minds of, if they do not fully prove, do hugely weaken and disparage it; like weak Physick, which if it drive not

Vide Sect. 4,



forth the ill humor, doth by accident exasperate it, and make the Patient worse; and therefore it is no way safe to trust so great and important an Article of our Faith with so feeble and airy a proof as this is.

Object. 3.

Thirdly, It is further objected, That all the common and more familiar methods of action appointed the Creatures, giving so excellent an account of themselves to a wise and considerate mind, it cannot readily be conceived to what end any of these Extraordinaries in Nature can minister, but to that of Divination of Events future.

Solut.

Though this be a most inconsequent and presumptuous reasoning, [*things must be for this end, for I know no other that they can serve,*] yet, because where the mind of man reacheth not the true causes or proper ends of any thing, it is easily tempted to take up in such vain and cheap resolves, as a superstitious multitude or a guilty fear may tender to it: and because most men are such *Gloria animalia*, as, like *Proteus*, to shift into any odd shape and form of opinion and conceit, to free themselves when held with the knot of any difficult and perplex *Phænomenon* laid before them; I shall therefore propose those higher and more excellent ends of these irregular accidents, which may satisfie mens minds, and (as a real Diamond doth its counterfeit) most effectually detect and disparage

disparage that little and mean end which vulgar Opinion makes them serve unto, that of an unnecessary and often hurtful curiosity in the knowledg of times reserved soly in Gods power and counsel.

First, then, *They serve to awaken more gross and heavy minds into a sense of the Being, Providence, and Greatness of God.*

1. *Of his Being.* One account why Atheists live in a constant neglect and inobservance of the God of Nature, is this, *All things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation;* the constant and even harmony which Nature makes, lulls men into a dull and sleepy inadvertency; whereas some harshness and discords now and then in the parts thereof (new and unwonted occurrences) are apt to awaken their dull and sleepy minds into a sense of some mighty Power, which runs through the World, and commands the Forces of Nature which way he pleaseth. 2 Pet. 3.

Since we lost the favor of God, we are greatly propense to lose the sense of Him: for if He observe a constant method in *the Works of Creation*, the God of Nature shall be lost and forgotten in the Power of Nature: if, as in the *Works of Providence*, He proceed by no ruled cases, never prescribe to himself, then He shall be eclipsed in Chance and Fortune: and therefore perhaps sometimes

Pla. 58. 11.

times He acts so accountably, and consistently to our Notions, in the Works of *his Providence*, that men are forced to say, *Verily there is a God which judgeth in the Earth*: and sometimes so irregularly in the Works of Nature, that men are forced to cry out, *The Finger of God!* Were the Works in Nature alway laid out by the line of an even, and every way immutable Law and Order, men would be apt to think (though they could not make sense of that thought) that all was done by Nature, and a kind of absolute necessity and fatality of Causes: and should Monsters, Comets, Earthquakes, &c. turn quotidian, men would be tempted to conclude the World a great Lottery, and all Effects owing onely to the blind and casual concurrence of Second Causes: Whereas a wise intermixture of some irregularities puts men upon reflection, and gives them to understand, that Natures ill-shaped letters at one time, are an assurance that she could not write so fairly and evenly as generally, had she not some Great Master to guide her hand, and bind in the powers of some Causes apt to exorbitate and fly out.

Pla. 104. 10.

2. *Of his Providence.* Should not Rivers sometimes stand, and Springs fail, men would not be so fully assured that it is *God who sendeth the Springs into the Valleys*, that

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it is *He who watereth the Hills*. Should there not happen some terrible *Vulcano's*, and fire eruptions, we should not awaken into a sense of that mighty Power, which keeps all that natural tinder in the bowels of the Earth from catching fire before its appointed time. Did there not new Springs break forth sometimes from the usually driest breasts of our common Mother [Deserts and Wildernesses] we could not, with the *Psalmist*, adore the Power of God discovered in turning *the Wilderness into a standing water, and dry grounds into water-springs*. Besides, the exorbitances of Natural Causes at some times, and their running like unruly Horses out of that way (those lines which common Nature hath prescribed them) resolve us, that their general stilness and order is owing to Him who *rideth upon the Heavens*, whose Wisdom and Power moderates all their blind and impetuous forces: A truth which the Ancients couch'd in their Fable of the Giant *Typhon* (which signifies *swelling out*) bidding battel to their most ancient Deity *Pan*, or Nature, but bound up and restrained by him in Nets as it were of Adamant.

Psa. 107. 35.

Psa. 68. 4.

Verul. Sap.  
Vet. fab. 6.

3. Of his admirable Greatness. The Holy Ghost, when designing to awaken the minds of men to a quick sense of the Majesty and Greatness of God, calls them to an

Job 26. 8, 11.  
Psa. 29.  
Amos 5. 8.  
Job 28. 4, 26.  
Eccl. 37. 6.

an attendance to those Works in Nature, which we distinguish, by the peculiar name and title of *Prodigies*, from the rest: As the *withholding of the Waters till they dry up*, and *sending them out to overturn the Earth*, Job 12. 15. the *making of a way for the Thunder*, stiled the *Voice of his Excellency*, chap. 37. 4. the *directing of the Lightning to the ends of the Earth*, the *sealing up the Lights of Heaven*, the *causing of the Winds to blow*, that the *Waters flow*, [sometimes without measure, in Inundations; sometimes without method, as in irregular Tides.] The *Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapor*, are stiled *Creatures* that fulfil [not so much the Law of Nature, as] the *Word of God*, Psa. 148. 8. Though the οἱ οἰκεῖοι φιλοσοφίας (as *Strabo* phraseth it) the *Domesticks of Philosophy*, and the *Intimates of Nature*, discover more clearly the *Greatness and Majesty of God* in some *Natural Agents* which work with less pomp and noise; yet others of a more heavy sense would never send their thoughts beyond this Engine of the World to the wise Contriver thereof, never reflect upon the *Power and Art* displayed therein, did not these *Extraordinaries in Nature* force them sometimes out of their heedless and drowzy temper: as the *Alarm in the Watch* will awaken those men to a reflection upon the *Art of its Contriver*,



river, which sleep by its more silent and even pulses and motions, which yet are instances of greater art and skill. Upon the occurrence of any matters strange and extraordinary, Nature hath taught us to cast up our eyes and hands to Heaven, in a kind of tacit acknowledgment that matters rare and wonderful owe themselves to Him who is θαυματουργός, the great Wonder-worker, who is accordingly to be acknowledged in them all. And therefore though we fear not a Comet or an Earthquake, yet may we thence take occasion to quicken our selves to a reverence and fear of that Greatness which did appoint them. The true spirit of Religion will not receive *Metum*, a fear of distrust, though *the Earth remove, and the Mountains be carried into the midst of the Sea*; but yet readily entertains *Timorem*, a fear of reverence, when it perceives the Earth to be but shaken by an Earthquake, or the Mountains to break forth into a flame.

Secondly, *Some of these petty alterations in Nature serve as a kind of Types, Essays, Assurances of that greater and more universal Alteration thereof, at the Consummation of the World.* That we might not distrust a Resurrection, God hath vouchsafed us (as Theodoret notes) πολλά τῆς ἀναστάσεως μιμήματα καὶ κηρύγματα, many pretty imitations

De Provid.  
Orat. 9.

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ons and natural Sermons thereof; as the rising again of decayed Plants from their roots in the Spring, the return of Herbs and Trees from their dying seeds into life again: Thus the frightful eruptions of fire from the Earth, wonderful Eclipses of the Lights of Heaven, the strange fires sometimes discovered in the Air, the mighty tremblings of the Earth, may serve (like *Jerusalem* portray'd by the Prophet upon a Tile) as little Maps and imitations of that more dreadful confusion which shall cover the whole face of Nature at the last day; and as a kind of *praludia* to that time when the Sun shall be clothed with darkness, the Heavens shall be on fire, the Elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the Earth, with all the works therein, shall be burnt up.

Ezek. 4. 1.

*Cacilius* the Heathen (as others of his Cloth used to do) derided the Christian Doctrine of a final Dissolution of the Works of Nature at the last day, with his *quasi Natura divinis legibus constitutus ordo aternus turbetur*; as if ever the perpetual Order of Nature, which hath received its seal and sanction from the Counsels of Heaven, can ever be ruffled and disturbed: Now these strange Alterations in Nature are but Prefaces to much stranger; and the breakings forth of mighty fires out of the Earth sometimes, give assurance that (like *Uriah*)

Minut. Fel.

it

it carries its own fate about it, such fiery materials as will quickly reduce it to a condition beneath its first *Chaos*, in that day of vengeance wherein God will *destroy the murderers* and abusers of his servants, and *burn up their polluted City*.

Thirdly, *God in them supplies the Soul with such Objects as He made it most apt to contemplate and admire.* In a Work of Art

(as *Longinus* observes) Man admires the curiosity and accurateness; in a Work of Nature, the vastness and magnificence thereof: *Longin. Πείρ. 4. 1. 45. Sect. 32.*

because in the former he looks for but *μέτρον ἀνθρώπου*, somewhat like Man (the measure and subject of Art;) but in the latter somewhat worthy of God: and further, that if any thing occur which is *παράδοξον*, *Id. Sect. 31.*

μέγα, καὶ ὡς πρὸς ἡμᾶς δαυμονιώτερον, strange, vast, and (in compare with our selves) big with a kind of Divinity, *Φυσικῶς πρὸς ἀνόμους*, as if carried with a kind of native instinct, we readily consider and attend unto it: And he instanceth accordingly in the Eclipses of Heaven, the vast Ocean, the *Vulcano's* of *Aetna*; as objects which usually command the mind to wonder and ecstasy. [The Soul hereby gives silent testimony to it self, that it was made to contemplate & admire that God, with whom all the first Exemplars of Greatness, Power, Glory, Beauty, dwell together; or whatsoever there

there is in the Works of *Art* or *Nature* in which there appear any rude touches and shadows of wonderful and admirable.]

Now then, as there are in *Nature* (the *Art* of *God*) those admirable curiosities appearing in the elegant fabrick of the *Creatures*, the mysterious anaromy of parts, and those more subtil and cryptick ways which *Nature* walks in toward her designed ends, which affect not the duller and more heedless part of the *World*, but supply the *Sons* of *Art* with fresh and repeated Wonders; so in these prodigious instances, the ruder sort of men (which carry their Souls in their eyes) find somewhat to ingage them to contemplate and admire. These Works go off from the common figures and measures of *Nature*, are great and vehement, and therefore proper objects to call forth the Soul into contemplation and admiration; which, whilst it stands thus at gaze, doth tacitly and interpretatively venerate that *God*, who in all these strange Events appears *wonderful in counsel, and mighty in working.*

Fourthly, *Many of these Errata in the Book of the Creature* lead us to an understanding of the evil of *Sin*, which hath made the *Creatures* thus subject to vanity and miscarriage. *Theophrastus* hath noted, that in the matter whereof natural things consist there is *μολὴ τοῦ ἐξ ὁμοιωτικῆς καὶ ἐδεξιόμοιου*

*In Fragm.  
Metaph.*

in  $\omega$ , much of it which is disobedient and unwieldy, too stiff and stubborn to be turned to the seal of Nature, to receive those signatures and impresses, which are best, and primarily intended to be stamp'd upon it: A defect which escaped not the notices of many contemplative Heathens, who could not resolve themselves of the proper cause thereof [Divine malediction laid upon the Creatures for the sin of Man.]

Fifthly, *They lead us into a more distinct knowledge of the Works of Nature*: Nature is the best Interpreter of it self; now (like tortur'd men) she then discovers her secrets, either when vex'd by Art in lesser Bodies, or disturb'd by Accident in greater. Comets, new Stars, monstrous Eclipses, Earthquakes, Meteors, Thunders, prov'd the first happy occasions of Philosophy (calling men to wonder and consider) and the great Assistants to it, all serving the knowledg of one mystery in Nature or other. And it is not without remark, that when God had sent Man into this World,  $\omega\varsigma\ \epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\ \mu\epsilon\gamma\acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omega\ \pi\alpha\nu\acute{\eta}\gamma\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\nu$  (as Longinus phraseth it) *as* into a great Theater, to contemplate the elegant varieties of his Works, and to combat the most difficult and daring mysteries in Nature,  $\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\chi\omicron\nu\ \epsilon\rho\omega\tau\alpha\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\epsilon\phi\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\nu\ \tau\alpha\iota\varsigma\ \psi\upsilon\chi\alpha\iota\varsigma\ \pi\alpha\nu\tau\acute{\omicron}\varsigma\ \alpha\iota\epsilon\iota\ \tau\acute{\eta}\ \mu\epsilon\gamma\acute{\alpha}\lambda\eta,\ \&c.$  *He hath seated in our Souls an invincible affection for an*

*Peel's R. 46.  
Sect. 31.*



intimacy and acquaintance with any Object great, and sealed with some special characters of Divinity: whence the Soul is at once excited, refreshed, directed and assisted in the study of Nature. These Extraordinaries therein are the Objects it is most naturally bias'd to a notice of, and which most assist the true interpretation of Nature; they first set our inquiries on work, and then reward them.

The Knowledge of Nature is greatly absolved by our understanding *what* is done therein, and *how* it is done, (the amplitude of Effects, and the truth of Causes;) the former Knowledge we advance to especially by an attendance to Nature in its constant and more easie freedom of Operation; but the latter we fairly arrive at by a regard to Prodigies Artificial, Nature as demeaning it self under the constraints of Art; and to Prodigies Natural, Nature's voluntary errors and steppings out of her more common toad of Operation. We see in these some rude and unfinish'd pieces in Nature, the Essays of some excellent work, which therefore serve (like a Ship half built) to discover her silent processes and more cryptrick methods in the building up and compleating of her Works. The Errors in Nature often reprehend the Errors in Philosophy growing from a lazy and scanty contemplation thereof.

the Soul is easily abused with Idols in Science, when it shapes out its Notions by Images in its own Fancy, or when it takes up (as it is prone to do) in some scanty Makims proceeding upon an easie attendance to Nature, as tendred to view soly in her more quiet and familiar postures.

And therefore if we had a more faithful *History* of the *Anomals in Nature*. (the want whereof is owing not a little to the superstition of men, which stains all it toucheth) we might be soon able to see beyond the surface of those things, which as yet seem placed in the World but to confound and pose us. But the evil is, that as the *History of Times* is usually drawn up, so as it may minister not to Truth but Faction; the *History of Nature*, so as to gratifie either Interest or Curiosity: So the *History of Preternatural Occurrences*, as it may serve Wonder or Superstition; not in so judicious and faithful a Relation of the critical circumstances of Accidents, as to make a square *Base* whereupon to erect the steady Principles of Philosophy.

Sixthly, *Such insolencies in Nature give us to understand, that the most common rules of Natural Operation are not without exception, nor her most known Laws simply immutable.* God is able to overthrow Nature by it self, by appointing one Natural Cause



Seventhly, It is usually added, That all these exorbitances in Nature serve to foil and set off the general beauty and elegance of its Works. All that *ὅλη ὁ κόσμος ἁρμόδια εἶναι* (in the language of Plotinus) matter not fully subdued and laid hold upon by form, doth but enhance the value of all those elegant proportions elsewhere discovered in the Creation. Every thing of name and value in the World [Prosperity, Health, Wisdom, Light, Beauty] hath its contrary set over against it, to recommend the more obliging and comely issues of Divine Providence to our notices and affections.

Eccles. 4. 14.  
Eccles. 7. 14.

These great ends (and greater no doubt are some of those which lie hidden in the recesses of the Divine Mind) offering so fair and easie an account of these irregular Accidents (if at least we may so term Events falling out by as necessary, though less known and common a rule and law of Nature, as its daily labors) to receive them, and that without any Interpreter to explain their language, as a kind of Divine Messengers to bring us news from Heaven, and (as the Angel to Daniel) to make us understand what shall befall our people hereafter, is to weary our selves to catch a shadow, and, like Adonis, to fall in love onely with the reflections of our own face, fancy and abused imagination, and to be vain with-

out any Apology in the World.

There is but one Objection more that I know of, which appears to merit a place under this head of rational considerations. It is this; All the Errors in Nature can give no rational account of themselves but by supposing the more than ordinary Power and Presence of God with them. Nature is a blind and fatal Agent, it hath neither design nor power of it self, turns not to the right hand or to the left, but as it is passive to the arbitrary impressions of an Almighty conduct. If then ~~God's arbitrary power~~, the immediate Presence of God to Nature must be called in to save these irregular appearances therein, what more pretending Reason can be alledged of any such temporary Suspensions of the common Laws and Rules of Nature, then the Divine Purpose to draw some sad Schemes of an approaching judgment in the frightful disguizes and monstrosities of things sensible, and to give notice that God is intent upon some strange work, that He seems to neglect the conduct of Nature, and to abandon it to its own blind and unruly powers.

To this I answer; I am not so afraid of Superstition as to take shelter from it in Atheism, an utter denial of the Power and Presence of God with Agents Natural. To cure a superstitious fear by a profane neglect



of God, is to burn an Idol with fire taken from the Altar. All the powers of Second Causes are derived from, moderated, and, when ready to faint and languish, restored by the Great Fountain of Power and Being. Our common Mother, *Earth*, would not, after so many labors, appear fruitful and beautiful as in her greener years, did not God continually *renew the face of the Earth*, re-inforce its feeble and exhausted Powers. Scripture (as if Nature were nothing but the more regular, visible, and Mechanical Explications of his Power and Wisdom) intitles his Agency to all the Ordinaries, and Extraordinaries therein: It attribytes the Thunder, not to the contest and juggle of contraries in a cloud, but to the *God of Glory*; and not the dew of Heaven, but the special blessing thereof, is said to *make the grass to grow for the Cattel*. There are three terms of familiar occurrence in the Ethnick Writers, of which (in the sense they use them) we have not the least air in Sacred Writ; *viz.* *Fortune* in their Ethicks, *Fortuna* in their Politicks, and *Nature* in their Physicks; the excellent endowments of the mind being stiled Graces therein, and attributed to the Divine Spirit; good and evil Events to the Divine Providence; and Physical Productions to the Divine Power. This great Machine of the World, like a

Pla. 104. 30.  
Psa. 147.

Pla. 29. 3.

Watch, though it contain very strong and powerful Springs of Action within it self, and such Wheels, *Causæ Natural*, whose elaborate figures and contrivance speaks them, to the first view, designed and fitted for some uniform and equal motions; yet these blind and decaying Powers must be managed and perpetually wound up by an Hand of Power and Counsel; or they will either stand still, or perform their motions without time and method. It is an assured Truth, Τὸ πᾶν ἔργον αὐτοῦ [ο Θεοῦ] ἐμπεδωμένον, καὶ ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἔχει τὴν διακόσμιαν οὐρανὸν ἐν ἑνὶ ἁρμονικῷ ὁμοῦ, ἵνα διὰ τὴν οὐρανὸν αὐτῶν ἀποκαταστήται. God hath very musically contrived the Universe, and so ordered and disposed the discordant sounds of the Elements, that the whole World is become a very lovely harmony; But yet this harmony would not last long, did not the Chief Musician strike time and measure, moderate and direct those parts, which are apt to be too quick and loud, to move so impetuously and unseasonably as to disturb the harmony of the whole.

Now this general presence and assistance whereby God appears to acknowledge and succor his own Productions, stands very well with a sufficiency (in its kind) in all natural Agents to exert those operations, to pursue those ends, to hold such place in the Universe, to maintain such regular figures and colors,

*Elem. Alex.  
Admon. ad  
Gent. p. 4.*

8. p. 1.  
31. 7. 1. 1.  
8. 2. 1. 1.  
41. 4. 1. 1.  
8. 2. 1. 1.

bevloler

colors, as even their *Nos. 6. & 7. 16.* Law originally sealed upon their several Species, and Orders appointed them unto. There is a great deal of unbodyed Art in Nature, and innate skill in Second Causes, to work after the pattern of those primitive impresses made upon the several ranks of Being. *O. 8.*

λος· ὁ δὲ ἐν ὑλῇ πεποιθὲς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα προσκινῶν ἐν ἡμῶν  
 σι, ὑπὸ ἄλλοις, ἀλλὰ ἐν ἀνάμνησιν ὁρῶντι καὶ ὑλῇ  
 ἐκείνῃ ἀλλοῖς δυνάμει μόνον· ὁ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα

οὐκ ἐν ὁδοῖς, faith Plotinus. For the seminal Reason operates in the matter, and that which works thus naturally is neither Understanding nor Sense, but only a fatal power to transform the Matter, not knowing what it self doth, but making only a print or form as in water. That general constancy and uniformity of Agents Natural in their Productions and Operations, and that Power which Art hath, by application of some more potent, to bind and countermand the weaker efforts of some more feeble and passive causes, proclaim some native and methodick powers and springs of motion in things, though (like the wheels of a Watch) these Principles do exert themselves according as some contingent and varying circumstances and occasions may determine. And therefore in Scripture we find the Power of God intitled to that effect in one place, which seems wholly

Plotin. Enne.  
ad. 2. l. 3.

Genl. L. A.  
Admiral. A. A.  
Genl. Alex.

Jo. 4. 8.  
Psa. 147. 18.  
Deut. 8. 3.  
Psa. 104. 14.  
Mark 4. 28.

resolved

Hof. 2. 31.

Lex summa  
essentia atque  
Naturæ, quæ  
vicissitudines  
rerum secatur  
percurrit, vis  
scil. primis  
particulis à  
Deo indita, ex  
cujus multi-  
plicatione om-  
nis rerum va-  
rietas emergit  
& constatur,  
cogitationem  
mortalium  
perstringere  
potest, subire  
vix potest.  
Bacon. Par-  
menid. & Te-  
les. Philof.

resolved into the force of Nature in another. If there were not some intrinsic fitness and capacity in Second Causes for the production of the Effects we see them delivered of, God's blessings would seem to be derived upon us but by disguised Miracles, and by idle and needless circuits, while conveyed to us in such multifarious subordinations of them, God first *hearing the Heavens*, and then *they the Earth*, and *the Earth the Corn*, and *the Wine*, and *they* through many intermediate preparations and digestions, the cravings of indigent Nature. Besides, the skill of the Great Artificer would be rendered to reproach, if after all those Criticisms of subtil Art, observable in the several parts of this Great Engine, the World, they should be thought so unwieldy and ill contrived, as to be sufficient for no motion without the extraordinary presence of some Intelligence to excite and manage them.

What it is which instructs the Stone to move to the great Center of heavy Bodies, and in the directest way it can; what *Natural Instinct* is (a thing which Art could never imitate) whereby bruta Creatures, before the discipline of Experience, are instructed to serve the ends, pleasures, necessities of their lower life, and to observe the customs and usages of their several Orders; what the native *Archæus* is, and whence en-  
abled

abled to beat out the matter into such uniform and elegant figures, even blindfold, are tedious, perhaps desperate inquiries, things which though a wise man think to know, yet shall he not be able readily to find. It may suffice to our purpose to say, that there are powers and measures of Operation originally imprest upon the distinct Orders of things, which exert themselves according as the capacity of matter, and other mutable occasions may determine and allow: and that therefore it may be as suitable to General Nature, that upon the interpose of such impediments, the motions of Causes be eccentric, and Productions monstrous, as that a Stone, glancing against a wall in its descent, should forsake its more natural and direct, and take to an oblique and slanting motion; or that a Seal should make rude and imperfect images when it meets with clay too little or too churlish to answer its just proportions. Nor, because we distinctly apprehend not what those potent and methodick Principles of Operation in Second Causes are immediately to be resolved into, nor how the Plastick Power in Plants and Animals is enabled without the discipline of Art to direct it self with so general a constancy to such comely and equal figures and motions, are these to be denied; any more than the natural Principle of all those swift and



and subtil motions in the fingers of the Lutanist, because they give a Philosopher so many perplex'd and troublesom Speculations. The sum of all is this; As there is a very necessary connexion between the Spirit of a Man, and the inspiration of the Almighty, in Wisdom; between the planting of Paul, and the increase of God, in the Church; between the making of the Watchman, and God's keeping of the City, in the State; between the diligent hand, and God's blessing, in our Callings; between the Sword of the Lord, and of Gideon, in War: So between the Spirit of Nature, and of God, in the Creation; (and therefore the Poet, as men of his Profession anciently were, was at once Divine and Philosopher, when attributing the equal Motions and Powers in this Great Body to a *Spiritus intus alens*;) nor are either to be denied, because the assistances of the one, and the native powers of the other, are in their natures and connexion so subtil and mysterious. Now, as any default in those moral Causes may occasion ignorance in the Mind, non-proficiency in the Church, surprisal in the City, poverty in the Family, defeat in the Battel; so the weakness or interruption of physical may be as soon reported by a Prodigy in Nature.

To all that hath been said (that I may shame this Argument as well as answer it) I further

Prov. 10. 4; 22.

Pla. 104. 30.

hironim  
sionum  
p. 104. 30.

further add; That it cannot but seem to a due valuation of things a strange vanity in those we contend against, that they seem so to sequester and ingross the sacred regards of men, and the Providence of God, to all anomalous Productions in Nature, as to leave very little to conduct and honor its more comely and regular issues; which yet make the most quick and vigorous report thereof: as those Tables which shew the elegantest features, and most natural imitations, do far more inhanse the art and reputation of the Limner, then the more monstrous and neglected labors of his Pencil. What cheap thoughts the great Philosopher had for this humor in men, appears sufficiently from what Maimonides hath recorded as the sum of his Perswasion in reference to Divine Providence: *Quicquid videt in corporibus cælestibus esse ordinarium, consuetum, frequens, immutabile & incorruptibile: quicquid item in rebus naturalibus ordinarie fieri, neque nisi raro & extra ordinarie mutari aut cessare, in illis omnibus Providentiam Divinam agnoscit. Quicquid autem videt, non semper, neque ordinarie fieri in individuis specierum, tum vegetabilium tum animalium, eorumque iterum vel rationalium vel irrationalium, de eo dicit quod per accidens fiat & sine Providentia Divina; quin imo opinatur Providentiam in istiusmodi*

Maimonid.  
Mor. Nevoc.  
P. 3. c. 17.

*istiusmodi rebus esse impossibilem.* The force of which words is this; *That whatsoever, in the whole compass of heavenly or sublunary Beings, was common, ordinary, immutable, a Divine Providence was to be acknowledged in: but in all irregular and exorbitant issues, it was impossible to conceive a Providence concerned, but that they were wholly to be attributed to Chance and Fortune.* Which Opinion (if it were Aristotle's) contains a far more judicious Error, then that which teacheth men to start and stare onely at the Monstrosities and Singularities of Nature, as the famous Instances of Divine Providence, and that upon pain and peril of a brand of Atheism, if they value their Understandings so far as first to ask a solid Reason *why*.

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SECT.

## S E C T. VII.

*An Answer to the several Scriptures alledged in favor of the adverse Opinion.*

The first Scripture Mat. 16. 3. speaking of Signs of Times, answered, by shewing the great disparity of Signs, things signified, the Times spoken of, and the Persons spoken to, in that Text, from those concerned in this Argument. Difficulties in every Science, with the Reason thereof. The second Scripture Joel 2. 30. vindicated from the corrupt glosses of the Adversaries. The Day of the Lord how understood in Scripture. Mighty changes in States described by the Eastern Nations by great Alterations in the Creation. Maimonides and Artemidorus cited for proof thereof: and also by the sacred Writers, and why. Prophecies have gradual accomplishments. The Prophecy of Joel when accomplish'd. The third Scripture Luk. 21. 11. speaking of Earthquakes, &c. before the Destruction of Jerusalem, answered largely: why such Signs of its destruction made choice of as seem'd to have a Natural Cause? The peculiar circumstances of those Earthquakes noted. Pious frauds in Religion useleß and dangerous.

**H**AVING thus driven this Opinion from all its little Holds, it remains now that we beat it from its Fort-Royal [the Authority of sacred Scripture, which seems to speak favor for it.] Now the first place of Scripture I take notice of, prest to the service thereof, is that speech of our Savior,

MAT. 16. 3.

*Ye Hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the Sky; and can ye not discern the Signs of the Times?*

In which words our Savior intimates, that  
as

Vid. 'Αγίου  
Διονυσίου.

as God in the Works of Nature hath consulted the conveniencies of common life, by appointing some certain Signs of the Seasons ensuing; so hath he also in his Providence assisted the happiness and advantage of our Civil and Spiritual life, by ordaining some *Signs of the Times*, whence we may be able to make a *Crisis* of the issue of things: and that it is a great instance of folly in men, that they are such able Interpreters of the various lines in the face of Heaven, but very uncapable, and stupidly inobservant of those rational signs and intimations of the state and condition of the present or future times of the Church. Now then what Signs of Times can more plausibly and rationally be assigned than Prodigies, which the heaviest men can observe, and the wisest cannot readily define to what end some of them (Comets especially and new Stars) can serve, unless to point out to the World a difference of Times.

I answer; Scripture (like over-pressed Grapes) gives a very ungrateful taste and sense, when pressed beyond its easie and native intent and purpose: that so the present Text is, will appear, if these four particulars be duly attended unto;

.First, The great *disparity of Signs*: The Signs whereof the Text is understood, were Signs of a Moral nature, such as were the lapsing



lapping of that People to the grossest ignorance and most general profaneness, the general expectation of the *Messiah* about that time raised up in the minds of men, *Luk. 19. 11.* the gradual lessening of the lustre and glory of the *Jewish* Polity and Pedagogy; by the ceasing of Prophecy, the absence of the Heavenly Fire, the Ark of the Covenant, the Cherubims, the *Shechinah*, the Oracles by *Urim and Thummim*, from the second Temple; the lapsing of the Government from Kings to Dukes, from Dukes to the *Sanhedrim*, from them to the *Romans*, there having been no Kings, types of Christ after *David* and *Solomon* (except *Hezekiah* be admitted a candidate for that honor.) This vanishing splendor of the face of *Moses* (that Oeconomy whereof he was the Minister) was a sign that the *Sun of Righteousness* was now arising, under whom a state of more spiritual and inward Glory was shortly to obtain. Besides, they were Signs long before spoken of, and of sacred and scriptural institution; such as were the departing (in a good degree at least) of the Scepter from *Judah*, the near expiring of *Daniel's Weeks*, the coming of *John the Baptist in the spirit of Elias*. To which I add, they were Signs miraculous, mighty Wonders (every way equal to those upon which the credit of the *Mosaical Dispensation*

Joh. 10. 25.  
Mat. 11. 5.

tion was built) which attended the Person and Doctrine of our Savior, *raising of the dead, cleansing the lepers, the healing the naturally deaf and blind,* to which, as his visible witnesses, he sometimes made his appeal, and directs the serious notices of his Hearers.

Whereas the *Signs of Times* I contend against, are neither of any Moral nature, (speaking not to the Reason, but the Fancy of men,) neither were they ever foretold, (God doth not now appear so far to value the World, as to promise the Prefages of a Prodigy to usher any change in the Affairs thereof,) nor are they Miraculous, the power of Nature, in such a coincidence of Causes, being able to reach the production of any of these prodigious Signs.

2. *The disparity of things signified.* All the fore-mentioned signs were *tokens for good*, but as the blushings of the Evening before the dawning of that happy day, wherein a state big and good enough for the title of the *Kingdom of Heaven* was to take place. Besides, they were matters of no narrow and private reference (the fall of some great Person, or the commencing of some petty War) but of a catholick concern, such wherein the felicities of *Jew and Gentile* were bound up, matters big enough for the solemnity of a sign to preface and bring on.

The

The things signified were also matters of huge importance; as, *That Jesus was the promised Messiah; that all the shadows and Rites of the Law were to expire and conclude (like the Phoenix in a nest of Spices) in the Graces, Truths and Glories of the Gospel-state; that the wall of partition was now to be taken away, and all Nations to own themselves Brethren under one common Father.* These things all men were concerned to know and believe; and therefore God taught them by great Signs, as well as excellent Preachers. Whereas Prodigies are supposed the signs onely of wrath and judgments, which yet often surprize men (not unfitly therefore stiled *Gods arrows*, which give a fatal, but withal a sudden and a silent wound,) and besides are presumed to come forth to serve some worldly and little ends, interests, and Opinions, which men easily perswade themselves Heaven hath espoused with as much passion as themselves.

3. *The disparity between the Times spoken of in that Text and our own:* The Times there intended were Times rather present than future; Times wherein the *Mosaical* Oeconomy, brought on with mighty signs and wonders, was to determine; Times wherein the Church was to be put under an immutable form of Administration (stiled therefore the *last Times in Scripture*.) Now

necessary it was that some remarkable Signs of those Times should be given forth in Scripture, that so the Age wherein that mighty change should fall might the better *acquiesce* therein, and rest assured from the sacred Characters of the Time, that they did not antedate the promised *Gospel-jubilee*: and succeeding generations might have the more secure a faith of the exhibition of the true *Messias*, because observing all the *Signs of the Times* to which he was promised, exactly conspiring in those wherein he was exhibited. Whereas all the changes, which chequer and vary the Times of the World now, are of no name and reckoning; in compare with this famous Period: And besides, are of frequent occurrence; for the World is so acquainted with Civil changes, that I should expect a Prodigy rather to give notice of some days of settled Tranquillity, to which the World is the greatest stranger: But the *Times* the Text speaks of are such as never shall return again.

4. *The disparity between the Persons to whom those words were spoken, and our selves.* The *Jews* were a people so used to Signs, that the *Apostle* tells us, 1 Cor. 1. 22. *The Jews require a Sign*: And it was the vulgar Opinion amongst them, that as all extraordinary Prophets were to seal their Commission with a Miracle; so all Events  
extra-

extraordinary were to be foretold by a Sign. Hence the *Jews* come to our Savior with that confident demand, *What Sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest all these things?* *Joh. 2. 18.* And the Disciples (upon the credit of this common conceit) no sooner hear our Savior foretell strange Events in reference to *Jerusalem* and the Temple, but they presently ask him, *What shall be the Sign when all these things shall come to pass?* *Mat. 13. 4.* God perhaps gave them Signs, to assure them that the Evils which befel them *arose not out of the dust*, but came upon them from the fore-appointing Counsels of God, whose favor they had ingross'd; and to awaken their dull and worldly minds to a lively sense of his Justice and Providence. But now, in the broad daylight of the Gospel, it is expected that we should not need awakening by any such Monitors into a sense and awe of the Divine Majesty. We must now believe without a Miracle, possess our selves in peace without a Sign, and derive our Repentance not from mighty Earthquakes and Prodigies, but from an ingenuous and understanding sense of Sin. To all this we may superadd, that (admitting S. *Luke* to expound S. *Matthew*) our Savior's speech plainly appears to have had no reference at all to *Times* in general, but to that famous Season of Time then cur-



rent: *Luk. 12. 56.* Ye can discern the face of the Sky, but how is it that ye discern not τὸν καιρὸν, *this eminent season?* as the words import. I suppose now that the light of what hath been said upon this Text of Scripture, is sufficient to chase away all shadow of argument from it, to abet any such Signs of Times as our Adversaries plead it in favor of.

And what though (as the Objection further urgeth) we should be forc'd to return a *non liquet* in reference to the true ends of Comets and new Stars, or any other Prodigies, sometimes discovered to the World: must we therefore conclude them but a sort of more glorious impertinencies in Nature, unless they serve our curiosity, by being made *Signs of Times*? Is it such news to hear so short a Creature as Man is, past his depth? We find the Almighty posing of *Job*, almost through every Science; In Geometry; *Knowest thou the ballancings of the clouds? whereupon are the foundations of the Earth fastned? or who hath laid the corner-stone thereof?* In Natural Philosophy; *Hast thou entred into the Springs of the Sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the deep? Hast thou entred into the treasures of the Snow?* In Opticks, *Where is the way where Light dwelleth, and as for Darknæss, where is the place thereof? By what way is the Light parted,*

Chap. 37. 16.  
38. 4.

Verf. 16, &  
22,

parted, which scattereth the East-wind upon the Earth? In Astronomy; Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season, or canst thou guide Arcturus with his Sons? Knowest thou the Ordinances of Heaven, canst thou set the dominion thereof in the Earth? In Arithmetick; Who can number the Clouds in wisdom? In Natural History; Knowest thou the time when the wild Goats of the Rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the Hinds do calve? God will have some things in Nature unsearchable, as to hide pride from man, so to discover himself to him: for it must needs be presumed that all these Mysteries came forth from, and are comprehended by some First Mind and Mighty Wisdom.

V. 14. & 24.

V. 32, 33.

Chap. 39. 1.

We are urged next with the words of the Prophet Joel, Chap. 2. 30, 31.

So Chap. 3. 13.

*I will shew Wonders in the Heavens, and in the Earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke:*

*The Sun shall be turned into darkness, and the Moon into blood, before the great and terrible Day of the Lord come.*

*The Day of the Lord is near, the Sun and the Moon shall be darkned, and the Stars shall withdraw their shining: From which words those Acts 2. 19, 20. are borrowed.*

To which may be added, because of a

likeness of expression, that place, *Luk. 21. 25, 26.*

*And there shall be Signs in the Sun and in the Moon, upon Earth distress of Nations; with perplexity, the Sea and the Waves roaring,*

*Mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the Earth, for the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken.*

*Rev. 16. 14.*

*Scias, omnem diem, quo Deus singularem & extraordinariam liberationem vel pacem immittit, Vocari diem Domini magni & terribilem.* Joel 2.

11. Maimonid.

Mor. Nevoc.

p. 2. c. 29.

See Dr. Hammond Not. in 10. cap. Hebr. v. 25.

Jer. 4. 23.

Ezek. 32. 7, 8.

Joel 2. 10.

Isai. 13. 10.

34. 4.

Ezek. 30. 18.

Rev. 6. 12.

8. 12.

Isai. 14. 18,

19. 20, & 23.

In which former Scripture, by the *Day of the Lord* we must understand some special day of vengeance; it being usual in sacred Writ (as some of the *Hebrew Doctors* observe) to intitle days eminent for any unusual expressions of divine favor or displeasure, *Days of the Lord*: whereas we find this day prefac'd and foretold by such prodigious Occurrences as easily resolve themselves into Causes Natural.

I answer, Learned Expositors generally understand those places not in any literal sense, but receive them all as so many Prophetical Schemes of speech (instances whereof are of most familiar occurrence in the *Prophets*) expressive of some wonderful Evils shortly to afflict the World: as they do also, on the contrary, the Promises of a new Heaven and a new Earth, the increase of the light of the Sun and of the Moon, of planting of the Heavens, and laying the founda-

foundations of the Earth, *Isai*, 51. 16. but as so many figurative expressions of some white and gladfom days shortly to succeed, *Isai*. 65. 17, 18. Particularly the learned

<sup>b</sup> *Grotius* is so secure of a figurative sense of such places, that he tells us, they are never to be expounded in all Scripture to any other.

And <sup>c</sup> *Maimonides* (one of the most learned and sober Doctors of the circumcised Nation) upon occasion of such kind of Prophetical Scheams of speech occurring in *Isaiah*, foretelling the ruine of the *Babylonish* Kingdom; expresseth himself to my sense in language which would be thought too peremptory and rude for my lips: Ne-

que quenquam puto ita ignorantem, cacum, literaque parabolarum, & narrationum historiarum, vel Oratoriarum, addictum esse, ut existimet, *stellas, cælum, lucem Solis & Lunæ, mutata esse, vel terram de centro suo motam, quando destructum fuit regnum Babel.*

*Verum representat nobis tota hæc narratio statum & conditionem Hominis victi, cui lux omnis atra, dulce amarum, imo cui terra nimis angusta, & cælum ruinam minitari videtur.*

The Translation whereof must, for brevity, be omitted. And indeed should we expound them literally, we should soon honor the falls of great men, or destruction of Cities, with greater or as great Wonders as attended the Crucifixion of our Savior. Be-

sides,

<sup>b</sup> Locutiones istæ de caligine Solis & Lunæ multis in locis reperiuntur, nusquam autem sensu physico sed sensu figurato. In Mat. c. 24. com. 27. c Maimonid. Mor. Nevoc. par. 2. c. 29. *Isai*. 13. 10, 13.

fides, what Histories ever mention any such astonishing Alterations in the frame of Nature, as the literal sense of these places would introduce a faith of?

Now the Prophets chose thus to deliver themselves, for some or all of these Reasons;

1. Because it was the custom of the Eastern Nations to describe great and mighty storms and troubles in a State in such phrases as these, *The darkning of the Heavens, falling of the Stars, shaking of the Earth, flying away of the Mountains, &c.* So Maimonides

ibid. p. 265.

assures us, in those words; *Apud Arabes, de eo, cui singulare aliquod infortunium accidit, dicitur, quod cælum ipsius in terram conversum sit, vel super terram ejus ceciderit.*

d Oneirocrit.  
l. 2. c. 36.

And <sup>d</sup> Artemidorus (whose interpretations of the various images and figures the Fancies of Men are seal'd withal in Dreams, are usually measured and directed by the received Opinions, Customs, Phrases, Traditions, common Hieroglyphicks in those elder Times, the knowledg whereof is the biggest end, that Book of Vanity can minister unto) tells us, *Ἡλίου ἀμαυρός, ἢ ὑ-  
φαίμενος, ἢ μορμύρον, πᾶσι πονηρὸς καὶ ἀνταρ-  
τικὸς* (vive). *The Sun represented in a Dream as obscured, or somewhat bloody, or making through heat a kind of murmur, is an image which succeeds very unhappily to all men.*

And



And elsewhere, Οὐτε ἡ ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὅτι γὰρ οἱ ἀστέρες εἰσὶν ἀγαθοὶ, ὅτε ἀφανεῖς ὄντες πολ-  
e Cap. 38. e.  
 jusd. lib.

λῶν γὰρ ὁ λαὸς πολεμῶν. Neither are the Stars represented as falling to the Earth, or vanishing away, good indications; but rather foretel the destruction of many men. And this, because the ancient Eastern Nations (from whose Books he professeth to have borrowed his pretended Rules to instruct the Interpretation of Dreams) used to express great Plagues and Calamities in the World by such kind of vehement and Parabolical Expressions.

2. Because these being the most remarkable and glorious Bodies in the World, terrible alterations in them seem the most proper representatives of mighty changes and alterations in Kingdoms.

3. Because the terrible judgments of God upon the *Babylonians, Egyptians, Jews and obstinate Gentiles* (set forth in such expressions) were but little images and schemes of the last and dreadful judgment; and therefore not unfitly character'd by such horrors in the several parts of the Creation, as shall really usher that last and great Day of which they were the Types.

4. Because these are expressions mighty and vehement; and so, very expressive of, and suitable unto, that hot and vigorous impression which the Spirit of Prophecy made  
 upon

upon the minds and imaginations of those holy men which were acted by it.

5. Because that anxiety and perplexity of mind, which should attend the plagues coming on men, was to be as great almost, as if they saw the Eye of Heaven, *the Sun*, put out, and the Earth to tremble under them, and the whole Creation become but one great Prodigy.

Now, in this figurative sense, the words (it is thought) were accomplished in their first and original intention, when that great misery was brought upon the Earth by *Nabuchodonosor*; and they received a further degree of accomplishment (as *S. Peter* intimates *Acts 2. 19.*) under the *Romans*, when the Land, which was but *shaven before by God's hired Razors*, had an utter baldness brought upon it (to use the expression of the Prophet) and it shall have its fulfilling in the outmost latitude of its sense at the Day of Judgment (of which some Interpreters soly understand it.) Prophecies have their *gradus & scalas complementi per diversas mundi atates*, (as the Lord *Bacon* speaks;) the last day onely is that true *πλήρωμα τῆς χρόνου*, *fulnes of time*, wherein they shall be compleatly fulfilled. God often draws similar and parallel lines of confusion over different Times and Places, whips many stubborn Children with the same Rod. As there are

*Iai. 7. 25.*  
*Jer. 47. 5.*

*De Augm.*  
*Scient. l. 2.*  
*c. 11.*

*Dan. 11. 31.*  
*12. 11.*  
*Mat. 24. 15.*

are in Nature, *una eademque Natura vestigia aut signacula diversis materiis & subjectis impressa*, symbolizing impresses and seals stamp'd upon very different subjects; so, in Providence, similar Blessings and Judgments upon very distant Times: and therefore Prophecies of the same Mercy or Judgment may have their repeated accomplishments.

There is one place of Scripture more which may seem to some to require, perhaps to refuse an Answer; viz. that *Luk. 21. 11.* where our Blessed Savior, foretelling that large line of confusion to be stretched out upon the Holy City, and whole Nation of the *Jews*, as a precedent sign thereof, tells his Disciples, *Great Earthquakes shall be in divers places, and Famines, and Pestilences, &c.* Now *Earthquakes* have been numbered with *Prodigies Natural*.

I answer, First, *When God hath once sealed them by his sanction and institution, Prodigies natural may be regarded as the signs of Events arbitrary and supernatural.* Gods Bow (without a string) in the Heavens, is to us a Sign, that the World need never fear perishing by any such fatal Arrow as once was shot out of the Clouds, *An universal Deluge*, although it be owing to a natural and necessary cause; as being, by Gods institution, advanced to the dignity of a Sign  
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of Grace and Favor. Thus when God had told the People, that, as an expression of his great displeasure against them for asking of a King, He would send Thunder and Rain (things in themselves natural, except it be said that the peculiar condition of that Season and Climate made them approach to a Miracle) it was a religious fear with which the People entertained their coming. God may appoint the crowing of a Cock (at such an instant of time) to be one of his Signs. So, when the Disciples had asked a Sign of their Lord, when all his Predictions concerning the Temple and Nation should come to pass, and he had mentioned amongst others *great Earthquakes*, they were then preferred a kind of Sacraments and Prophetick Symbols of the terrible shaking of the *Jewish* Worship and Polity now approaching. And indeed when the great wickedness and security of that generation had merited, that that fatal time should fall as a *snare upon all them that then dwelt on the Earth*; such Signs as seemed to have a natural cause (as Earthquakes, Famines, Pestilences, and the *Xiphias* which hung over *Jerusalem*) appeared the most proper indications thereof, as which (because hapning at that time, and in that order) might sufficiently warn and alarm the observant Christians, and lull faster asleep the more Atheistical and incredulous part of that

1 Sam. 12.

Luk. 21. 7.

that Age, appearing to them but the more unusual Works of interrupted Nature. To conclude now, that because some Earthquakes of Gods appointing were once his Signs, therefore all are, is as inconsequent an inference as this; The Bread and Wine are Signs and Seals in the Sacrament, because stamp'd with a divine institution; therefore all Bread and Wine may challenge the same degree of reverence and regard from us.

Secondly, These Earthquakes had such characters upon them, as might sufficiently inclose and distinguish them from the common issues of disturbed Nature: As,

1. *Their Greatness*: The Text stiles them *great Earthquakes*. It is likely there appeared in them more then the bare force and impatience of some crude and imprisoned vapor. We read of an Earthquake in the days of *Uzziah*, so great and terrible, that it was preferred an \* *Epocha* in the *Jewish* Histories: *Josephus* reports that some furlongs of the Mountains about *Jerusalem* were rent asunder, and Cities swallowed up by it. If *Aristotle* stiled the *Celta* mad men, because an Earthquake would sooner make a Mountain tremble then them; certainly the title is too little for those which were not impressivve to some fear of God, when they saw him let loose the powers and forces of

\* Amos 1.1.



of natural Agents upon them, perhaps in some such dreadful maner.

Vid. Grot.  
Not. in Mat.  
c. 24. com. 7.

2. Their *Multitude* : [there were *Earthquakes in divers places*.] Nature ran often against her bias in the same instances, that so the effect might not be intuled to the rub of some casual impediment, but to the hand of Heaven over-ruling and directing it. And should I here grant (which I see no reason to do) that many and great Earthquakes, in a Continent especially, are a sign of some approaching Evil; our Adversaries could advance little upon the concession, both because the example will, I believe, be found an Heteroclite, and to stand alone in the History of Nature; as also because I conceive they would not adventure to compare a Monster or fiery Meteor with the terrors of so many Earthquakes (generally singled out in Scripture, as the Monitors of the Divine Power and Majesty.)

3. Their *dismal Attendants* : The Creatures would not nourish such Rebels against Heaven as were then upon Earth, *there were Famines*; the Air refused to cherish and refresh them, *there were Pestilences*; the Eyes of Heaven shrunk away from such hated Objects, *the Lights of Heaven were darkned*; the Earth groaned and staggered in a sort under her vile burden, *there were Earthquakes in divers places* : so that these signs

signs might, as letters do, speak that to a pious fear, in conjunction, which they could not so well have done in separation.

4. *Their Divine Prediction: There shall be Earthquakes,* and each Earthquake was a Sign, not as an Event wonderful, but as an Event foretold. *Sam* his meeting of *three men, carrying three Kids, and three loaves, and a bottle of wine,* when he parted from *Samuel*, might have been received with the slight and passing notices of a casual and common accident, had it not been foretold by the Prophet as a sign of Gods presence with him. And thus any one of these Earthquakes might perhaps have been received but with the common wonder which any rare and prodigious Occurrence calls forth; but because foretold, it was a sign, when it came to pass, that that Eye of Prescience which could foresee an Event which held of no steady cause, did with as much truth and certainty foresee that fearful desolation approaching, whereof it was appointed a sign and symbol. So that this place of Scripture appears to lend as little strength and assurance to that weak and falling cause, which catcheth at it for support, as the foregoing.

From what hath been hitherto spoken concerning Prodigies *Signal Natural*, it may appear, that, howsoever they may possibly

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serve as a pretty ground for the Fancy of a Poet or an Orator to descant upon, which are to apply themselves to those Powers of the Soul *Affection and Imagination* which understand but little; they are too hollow and sinking a foundation to build any Religious Conclusions upon. We must not bring the Stage into life by mimical gestures and affectations, nor yet into Religion by *cunningly devised Fables*, and very affecting *Nothings*. Pious frauds are a kind of weak and impure feet of clay, which will at last deceive and sink under that weighty Body of Religion, which ever relies upon them for support.

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CHAP.

## CHAP. III.

*Concerning Prodigies Præternatural, and the  
several kinds of them.*

**A**LL the Extraordinaries in the World, which fall out by no steady Rules and Causes (to serve, as I can, the distinctness of this Discourse) I stile Prodigies Præternatural. Now these Omens are *either of a more narrow and confined reference, thought to come forth onely to the service of some private Persons and little Occasions, being in themselves of a more private make and character; as the falling of the Salt, the tingling of the Ear, the casual rupture of the Shoo-latchet, the voice of the Screech-Owl, neezing to the right or left, odd voices or noises heard about the house in the silences of the night. Or of a more catholick and publick reference, such as are the approach of some strange kind of Fish to the shoar, unknown noises in the Air, the Apparitions of Spirits in frightful forms, the figures of Armies and military appointments discovered in the Air, and many more of the same cast. These were anciently and are still conceived the dreadful harbingers of some common calamity by Wars, Plagues, or the Funerals of Princes. Superstition being a fretting leprosie,*

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profie, of which this Great House will never be perfectly cured till it be quite demolished; I shall serve those slight thoughts I have for them all in a slight survey of the Original and Reason of their so catholick a regard and observation.

## SECT. I.

### *A Consideration of the Doctrine of Omens.*

The Doctrine of private Omens, vain: they strictly forbidden in Scripture. A double account given of the Original of them among the Heathens. The Design of the Devil to dishonor humane Nature, and of Christ to advance it, in all his institutions, noted. The impure Rites of the Eucharist, to what end subservient. Piellus. The occasion of the use of some Omens in the Jewish Nation. The instances of Eleazer, Gideon, Jonathan, considered. The use of Lots by Joshua and Saul for Divination then warrantable. A water of jealousy, why allowed the Jews. No such Omens allowed the Jews as the Heathens used. The sin and vanity of all regards of them now. Omens a kind of sign between the Devil and his Votaries of old. The observation of Omens of a more publick reference judged an hurtful vanity. The profane Opinion the Heathens had of God upon the presence of any of them, noted from several Writers of theirs. The evil influence they have upon the minds of men now. A double account of the great Opinion men have of them. The greatest part of the Ethnick Divinity grounded upon Experience without rule. The conceit of God's giving forth some shadows and pictures of his great Works before he set about them touch'd upon. A double Example, suitable to that Persuasion, instanc'd in.

**T**HE Doctrine of private Omens, as soon as fastning upon my hand, I should



should shake off (as the Apostle did the venomous Beast) and deliver the Observation of them to that smoke and darkness whence it did at first arise; But for fear lest some weaker constitutions be poisoned by it, I conceive it a charity to kill it before I throw it off my hand.

How ancient the Usage of Divining by such petty occasions was, may appear from that inhibition *Levit. 19. 26. Ye shall not use any Divinations, nor observe Times:* where the Hebrew word *וַחֲזָנוּ*, as also its correspondents, *οἰωνίζεσθαι* and *augurari*, do import, though not in their Original, in their use (the best standard of the true value of words). *Omen quaecunque captare, puta ex vid. Grot. in sternutatione, ex Oculi subsultu, ex corrigia locum. rupta, ex nomine hominis qui occurrit nobis.*

And again *Deuteron. 18. 10.* we find all kind of Divinations but by immediate application to Gods Prophets, banish'd the Jewish Nation; both sought and tendred, in those words; *There shall not be found among you* *מַדְבֵּר*, that is (saith Munster) *Experimentator, qui sortilegio aut stipulatione investigatum bonum sit iter arripere, aut opus aliquod inchoare;* as by the falling of an erected Staff this way or that, the opening of a Book upon such or such words, and many such like, of which *Maimonides* at large. *Maimonid. de Idololat. c. 10, c. 11. sect. 4.* And that word *מַדְבֵּר* there used, prohibits

the seeking the knowledge of any thing future by a curious attendance to any singular and unusual occurrence in common life.

Now the solemn regard of any such singularities in life, as Presages, might grow from the subtil Agency of the Great Father of imposture, who by influencing the minds of men, and sometimes Events of things, might easily (especially when the general blindness of men made them apt to swallow any gnats and filth) work them to great Opinions of such Accidents, *ἡ οὐρανὸς ὁ θεὸς ἔατα μὴ δύναιτο ἵνα τὸ Δαίμονον ὁ ἀνθρώπου, καὶ κατὰ τὴν αἰσθησὶν αὐτοῦ ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν ἔατα καὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλο καὶ ἐν τῇ γῇ καὶ τῇ θάλασσῃ. To this very end and purpose that Man might easily be abused and cheated by Devils, at any time, and his mind might be drawn off from Heaven and God to Earth, and things yet lower than that: as Origen assigns the reason of his appointing Divination by the chirping or motion of Birds. But I conceive the more catholick end he aimed at in those Auguries, and these Omens, was the making of Man as much a slave and a fool as possible, and to deface all the remaining characters of the Divine Image upon him. For as all our Savior's Institutes were directly level'd to the advancement of that Nature himself had united to his own, and to bless man with liberty, peace, largeness of heart, soundness*

Orig. cont.  
Cels. l. 4. p.  
228.

of

of mind, power, and majesty; On the contrary, the Devils Rites & Sanctions aimed at the robbing him of the very shadow of these great things, and therefore they were all either arbitrary, idle, slavish, frightful, cruel, obscene, or dark and irrational; so to render the Observers of them as abject and cheap, as unworthy of God and themselves, as he

could. *Pfellus*, speaking of those *ἑνεία ἀνθρώπων μορφαί*, Beasts disguised in the shapes of Men, the Ancient *Euchita*, tells us, among other impure Rites, that they were reported to eat the Excrements of a man, conceiving that thereby they procured *φίλα*

*σφίσι καὶ ἀποκρίσσει δαίμονια*, the Demons to be kind and conversable to them, that which he inclines to believe, there being (as he adds) nothing so grateful to those so opposite Beings, as that envied Man, graced with the Divine Image, should lapse into so great a contumely.

This so grateful end of his (the reproaching the living Images of God) he very much served upon these Omens, which tended onely to dishonor the minds of men with poor thoughts, silly notions, childish fears, sorry speculations, and such perpetual jealousies of Events as often cow'd them out of all use of Reason and Courage in a civil business.

When the Devil had once planted this Opinion of Omens, it is likely it received a

*Pfellus*  
*ἑνεία ἀνθρώπων μορφαί*  
*Δαίμον.*  
 P. 18.

*οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔτι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μακρὰν ἠδίστον, ὥς τὸ ἔφθελλον ἀνθρώπου εἰκόνην πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸν δαίμονι ὑπερεῖν.*

Plut. de Isid.  
& Osir.

great increase from that vulgar Notion among the Heathens, That besides One great Cause and Source of Good, there was an Anti-Principle of Evil, of as great force and activity in the World, who had under him several black Officers to be sent upon hurtful and mischievous dispatches. So *Plutarch* delivers their sense, ἐν πῶς ἐν ᾧ τῷ εὐχρηστῷ μεγάλαι καὶ ὑπερβαῖν, δυνάμεις ἵνα αὐτὸν δεῶνται, αἱ χαρμαὶ τοῖς τοῖς τοῖς, &c. That there were in the encompassing Air some great and potent Natures, tetrick and morose, which rejoice in such things, those severe Fastings and Penances, Woundings, Whippings, and the like bodily severities which men endeavored to appease them with, which he was then speaking of. Now they might readily perhaps conceive, that when ever this Evil Principle was about to serve its envious and unhappy Nature by some ill turn, the Good One did by such odd accidents, as by some secret and friendly nods and becks, give men notice of its malign purposes and intentions.

But what ever the ground was this Opinion grew from, certain it is that it spread and grew extreamly; no Times, Places, Sounds, Voices, Occasions, Names, Persons, but retained a tincture of it. The Heathens used to go (what *Tully* relates of *Metellus*) to their Temples, in destitution  
of

of a Sign and Omen in a matter of concern,  
 to receive one from the Gods: And it is not  
 unlikely that this might be the true occasi-  
 on why God (who in many other instances;  
 not proper for this place; *ἑνοχόρναρ*, did Acts 13.18.  
 bear with their manners and customs) indul-  
 ged the People of *Israel* the use of Signs  
 and Lots and Omens, to assure and resolve  
 their anxious and solicitous minds about the  
 issue of some worldly affairs. *Joshua* and Josh. 7.  
*Saul* took to a Divination by Lot to find  
 out *Achan* and *Fonathan*; and *Gideon* recei- Judg. 6. 37.  
 ved the Dream and the interpretation of 7. 14, 15.  
 the *Midianitish* Soldier as an assured Omen, 1 Sam. 14. 9,  
 of success; and *Fonathan* appointed such 10.  
 words spoken by the Enemy, as a Sign to  
 him and his Armor-bearer of an happy hour  
 to attempt upon them in; and the Servant  
 of *Abraham* the coming forth of *Rachel* in  
 such circumstances, as a token for good to  
 him of the happy issue of his journey. All  
 which were not (as some conceive) Exam-  
 ples extraordinary; and proceeding upon  
 some immediate instinct of the Divine Spi-  
 rit, but in that Age warrantable and usual  
 ways of Divination, at least for Persons of  
 Place, and in matters of greater moment.  
 And this because God was graciously plea-  
 sed *ωὐκ ἐξ ἁλάρου* (as the Fathers speak upon  
 like occasions) to stoop and condescend to  
 the weakness and peevishness of that People,  
 long



Vid. M. She-  
ringham Cod.  
Fom. p. 69, 70.

long used to such kind of Lots and Omens amongst those Idolatrous Persons they were mingled with, and as much touch'd with care and passion in reference to the issue of worldly matters as they, and (in all likelihood) would have been tempted to apostate to them, if not provided of some Omens and Signs and Oracles to arrest their anxieties, and resolve their doubts as well as the Heathen were: To this purpose therefore a learned man, speaking of Lots and Signs, saith well, *In veteri lege non infrequens fuit talium sortium exercitium, ut ille populus [Judaicus] ad Gentium mores proclivis averteretur.* Thus the use of a water of jealousy was permitted by God as a Sign to that People above measure jealous, in compliance with them who had been long accustomed and hugely prone to this and other Ordeels in use among the Heathens; to whose Rites and ways of Worship, by forbidding some and tolerating others, he would not leave them any temptation to approach. However we find not that God ever allow'd his People the use of any such common and standing Signs and Omens as the Heathens attended to, as *the falling of the Salt, the neezing to the left, the crossing of the way by an Hare, the motion of Smoke, the erection of a Staff, the colors and figures of the intrails of the Sacrifice, and the like;* but  
the

Vid. Grot.  
Not. in Num.  
5.

the Omens and Signs made use of at any time among them, were either of God's own appointing, or the Persons choosing, for that particular turn and occasion; and never used again as an abiding Sign of any such Event as it once pointed to.

As for our selves now, we have no reason why we should (nay, much why we should not) vouchsafe the honor of a solemn notice to any such little incidencies as these. Methinks a very little light of Reason and Consideration might serve to discover them all to be of too beggerly and abject an appearance to be preferred to the reputation of God's Monitors. Certainly any serious Opinions of such chances must needs tempt a man to sacrifice the peace and tranquillity of his mind, and a calm and easie repose upon the Providence of God, an hundred times in a week: And by these we shall tempt the Great Enemy of our Peace and all right apprehension of things, by odd noises, voices and tumults in the night, perpetually to abuse and fright us. To all this I add, That such Omens as I now contend against were anciently (besides other uses he made of them) a kind of Signs and Sacraments between the Devil and his Votaries. For as the Devil, having usurped the Worship of God, appointed such kind of Rites and Ceremonies, the performance whereof was a sign

*Vid. Pet. Thy-  
raum l. de  
nocturnis tu-  
multib.*

sign that his Worship was intended, by whom those Rites were appointed; and having arrogated the honor of Trust, and Expectation of Help in a strait and Recovery in a Sickness, he appointed such Images, Charms, Ligatures, Critical Postures, Words and Sounds, the use whereof was an interpretative trust *in*, and tacite invocation of that Power from whom those Signs received their institution: so also having assumed the honor of a constant fear, awe, and observance from men (that so he might leave nothing for God) the observation of all kind of Omens was of his ordaining to be a standing Sign of their continual fear and dread of his Power to bring upon them the Evil aboded, and to engage them to all endeavors possible to reconcile his peevish and touchy Greatness by some Februations, idle and arbitrary Rites and Usages which himself had appointed them unto. So that I presume no clean and chaste hands will be forward to touch and take up any such Ominous Observations, so extreemly soil'd and polluted by so unhallowed an end and institution. But lest more words about this famous instance of Ethnick Superstition should be interpreted not so much a design to inform, as to reproach the present Time, and not so much to kill it, as to rake it out of its forgotten dust, I shall afford  
it

is no further place in this Discourse.

As for those Signs and Omens of a more common and publick make and reference, I assert, without further ceremony, the Observation of them all a very hurtful and headless vanity.

I. I stile the Observation of such things a very hurtful vanity. The regarding of these and the like Occurrences, as Prelages of Evil, served heretofore but to cherish in men this deformed thought of God, That (all things being subject to the law of an insuperable Fate and a blind necessity) all He could do was onely to foresee an Evil, and then (to piece out his Power with his courtesie) by these and the like Accidents to awaken men to shift for themselves, and as they could to get out of the way, or to strengthen themselves by resolution when any blind and fatal Causes were ready to rush furiously upon them. A matter which may appear from the words of *Ovid*, where (speaking of *Venus*) he thus delivers himself:

*Verba jacet, Superosque movet, qui rumpere  
quanquam*

*Ovid. Metam.  
l. 15.*

*Ferrea non possunt veterum decreta Sororum,  
Signa tamen luctus dant hæc incerta futuri:  
Armæ ferunt inter, &c.*

*Her warmer Speeches melt the Gods, who stand  
And hold their finger up, although their hand  
Can't*

Can't bend those Iron Laws th' old Sisters  
make,

The noise of Arms ('tis said) was heard, &c.

And to a like purpose *Silius Italicus*, in  
those words;

*Hec vani monitus, frustra, morantia Parcas  
Prodigia! heu Superi fati certasse minores!*

*Vain Prodigies! that come to stay*

*His death whom Destinies will stay,*

*Alas, between the softer Gods*

*And sullen Fates, there's too great odds!*

Now Poets (though in a matter of History  
they usually follow their own humor, and  
stretch out by the force of imagination a  
matter which shrinks of itself to a short and  
simple narration, y<sup>e</sup>t) in a matter of Opi-  
nion commonly follow the humor of the  
Times, and take liberty to express freely the  
manners and thoughts of the Age wherein  
they live. That this was one of those Fan-  
tasms which abused the minds of men in the  
darkness of Gentilism, may appear more  
fully from the words of a more severe  
and serious Writer, *Valerius Maximus*,  
who having told us of the several strange  
Prodigies, as the finger of God held up to  
warn *Pompey* before his encounter with *Ce-  
sar*, or to declare his fall; he infers from  
them, That the Deity evidenced [*Se Pom-  
peii*



peii erroram inhibere voluisse,] a great wil-  
lingness to have prevented the error and rash-  
ness of Pompey, but onely the insuperable  
Laws of Fate would not permit him (though  
otherwise a Person sober and advised enough)  
to weigh all those forewarnings in the balances  
of counsel and consideration.

Inviſta leges  
neceſſitatis,  
pectus alioqui  
ab amentia  
remotum, Pro-  
digia iſta ju-  
ſta æſtimati-  
one perpen-  
dere poſſe  
non ſunt, l. 1.  
c. 6. ſect. 12.

And if the Opinion concerning Prefages  
by these or the like Occurrences do not now  
comfort and abet any such base Perswasions  
concerning God, in some minds, it is well:  
sure I am, if they do not give men to think  
that God is under the Power of Fate, yet  
they little less then assure that Events are:  
For either the intimations by such kind of  
Signs are (as the shadows of the Mountains)  
ineffectual, movable, and vain; and then  
why do men at all regard them? or they are  
certain and immovable; and if so, they sup-  
pose the Event to be fatal, and placed be-  
yond the redress of counsel and endeavor;  
and call upon men onely to despair gallant-  
ly, and to ride out the tempest approaching  
with as much courage and resolution as they  
can: (The Evils both to the State and Re-  
ligion, in the womb of which Opinion, swell  
so visibly out, that it is needless by argu-  
ment to rip it up and lay them forth to com-  
mon view and notice.)

Besides, the Opinion greatly tends to  
lessen and degrade the Majesty of Heaven  
in

in our thoughts; while it prefers any such weak and pitiful occasions to the repute of Gods trumpets, to give notice that he is now going forth to some great act of Justice upon the World: it aims also directly to a lessening of our Faith of the Divine Goodness and Kindness, while it teacheth us to imagine we discover a *Fury* in every strange issue of Providence; and to conclude, it is Mercy rather which is Gods strange work, (the black Ensigns of Wrath and Vengeance being continually supposed hung out in one unusual Accident or other.) It tends also to leave in the minds of men with four thoughts of Providence, as if designed to bereave them, not only of Happiness, but the very hopes and shadows thereof; and (as Benjamin did his Mother) first to pain and torture them by mighty fears, and then to kill them by some great evil, of which, if inevitable, it is better not to be aware.

*Sic cæca futuri  
mens hominum fati, licet asperare timeant.*

*Let me be blind as Fortune to receive  
Her fatal stroke, may hope my fears deceive.*

Finally, the Opinion doth make even good men too much to concern themselves in the affairs and issues of things in this worthless and giddy World, to stretch themselves in

to Godliness, by inquiries after things wrapt  
up in futurity, and fills them too full of vain  
hopes or fears, too take up with composed  
and thankful minds in that present portion  
which the hand of Providence deals out to  
them. W. arminianism and valentia or boldness

of 2. The Observation of any such Objects of common Wonder, as Presages, is also a groundless headless vanity. The Person that entertains his thoughts and studies much with them, gives (like those in that famine, 2 King. 6.) a great price for an *Asses head*: For the Opinion (like the Image of *Nebuchadnezzar*) while it pretends to an *head of gold*, and seems to promise Oracles and the knowledge of Futurities, it stands, for ought I can discover, but upon these two weak feet of clay: of which shall more be

TO II. *Narrow and scanty Observation*: Men (it may be) have heretofore observed some few Evils to tread close upon the heels of these or the like Prodigies, and therefore are easily persuaded that they were ushered by them; and they can never after shew themselves; but it is presumed they come forth to deliver some sad and ungrateful message. It is this also hath given credit to the regard of some as *suspicious*, others as *insuspicious* days, in the life of some great Persons especially, *viz.* the Observation of some happy or unhappy Events which the

*morn* of such a morning hath perhaps twice  
 or thrice brought forth unto men. As there  
 are the disports of Nature; of which before,  
 so (be it spoken with reverence) there are  
 the disports of Providence: As God is  
 pleased to display his multifarious Wisdom  
 in the many pretty varieties in Nature, so  
 He seems delighted with some pleasant con-  
 stancies and uniformities in the Works of  
 Providence; whereof the sending of many  
 great blessings or afflictions upon a Person,  
 just on such a day of the week, or returning  
 year, is an especial instance; and this per-  
 haps to try whether we be such *men in un-*  
*derstanding* as not to suffer any distrust of  
 his Providence to break in upon us upon  
 such a day, or after such accidents, because  
 of some little disasters formerly befalling us  
 then, more then at another time. As for  
 that Observation and Experience here al-  
 leged, though we have already found it a  
 very dry breast, and unable to cherish this  
 Opinion; yet, because it still runs with so  
 much passion and expectation to it, I shall  
 endeavor to imbitter it, by shewing that the  
 whole Ethnick Divinity supported it self  
 mainly by the credit of a great Experience:  
 this appears by that Plea which *Celsus* in  
*Origen* enters for his cause; *To what purpose*  
*(saith he) is it to relate at large what strange*  
*things our Prophets and Prophatesses have*  
*foretold*

foretold from the Oracles? what strange  
 foresights the inspection of the Sacrifice hath  
 blest many withal? our *edward* & *edward* re-  
 ceived superior; what strange things have  
 been discovered by other prodigious symbols? *2*  
 All humane affairs are full of instances, &c.  
 In sum: There is not a more giddy or dan-  
 gerous Rule to judge or practise by, then Ex-  
 perience, without good Maxims to direct  
 and assure it: without these, Men may  
 quickly credit the Devil's appointments in  
 the shew and disguise of Gods.

2. Weak and childish dislikes of things:  
 Objects and Persons we conceive a kind and  
 courteous Opinion of, we can easily perswade  
 our selves come forth with good tidings. *1* We *2* Sam. 18. 27.  
 can readily look for an emblem of Peace  
 from the lovely Dove. But where matters  
 ungrateful fall before us, we usually serve  
 our little hatreds, by deriving upon them the  
 Opinion of being ill abodements, and we  
 quickly conceit that they come about us  
 (like the hated Birds of night) against a time  
 of mourning. For we may observe that the  
 Occurrences to which Imagination hath af-  
 fixed the Opinion of their being ill Oments,  
 are generally such as we shrink from, and tol-  
 low with dislike; as the firing of Houses by  
 Lightning, monstrous and deformed Births,  
 dreadful Eclipses, Apparitions in the Air,  
 strange Voices heard in the night, Earth-  
 quakes,



quakes, bloody Waters, fiery Impressions, &c. We hate these things, and therefore avenge our selves of them, as we can, by a vain conceit, that they prophesie onely evil things concerning us. This Opinion then having no better support to trust unto, it were to overvalue it to put forth any great strength of Reason to throw it down.

Only perhaps some contemplative Persons may perswade themselves, that the foundation of this Opinion is not laid so much upon the surface, as I would make my Reader to believe: for as there was a pretty conceit among some of the Ancient (and more mystical sort of Philosophers, That all things in the upper and intelligible World were lined forth in some parallel instances and similar figures here below; and that *no vnto* matters intelligible were *no off* *aidm* *manew* *ly* but the true fillings up of things sensible, which carry but some general and rude lines and images of them; thus some Persons seem strongly perswaded, That all the greater Works of God are first portrayed in some little Pictures and Images of them, and that therefore many strange Accidents are to be received as a kind of shadows of things to come; and a sort of *ca* *den* *ly* *ex* *av* *in* *na* exemplars and types of some great and unusual Work to follow after. Thus the sinking of the Lambeth Ferry-

Ferry-boat, with the Arch-Bishops Coach-horses and Coach-men, to the bottom of the Thames, Septemb 19. 1633. the very first day he removed from Fulham to Lambeth, was (saith one) no doubt a Presage of his own and the Arch-Bishopricks sinking through his pride and violence: (With as good reason may I add, That their swimming again at last was a sign that the Function which the proud waters had so long gone over, should at last rise above them all.) Thus when William the Conqueror first leapt out of his Boat, and his feet sunk somewhat deep into the soft and yielding shoar, the accident was received as an Omen that he and his party should take a very deep and firm footing on English ground. But I believe it will appear to the most, altogether unnecessary to bestow much breath to break this pretty bubble, which hath nothing but wind therein, and will break and refute it self by its own airy and transparent Principles; though perhaps with some (that know not to distinguish between an Argument and a Similitude) the conceit may appear of some value and moment.

Author of the  
Breviat. of  
the Life of  
Arch-Bishop  
Lamb, p. 35.

## SECT. II.

## Concerning strange Sights in the Air.

To discourse of strange Sights in the Air, with certainty, difficult, and why. The truth in reference to them, probably delivered in three Conclusions. The Appearances in the Air precedent to the destruction of Jerusalem concluded certain and significative, upon several accounts. Luk. 21. 26. explained. The Destruction of Jerusalem a fit Type of the final Destruction of the World. The Prodigies in the Sibylline Oracles whence taken: they concluded consequences. God's usage to other his Chosen People by some prelusory Essays, noted in several instances. The hasty reception of Bar-Chosha, a great instance of the strange insatiation of the Jews. What the Jews intended when demanding a Sign from Heaven. Luk. 11. 16. and Mat. 16. 64. explained. The prodigious Appearance in the Air before the Destruction of Jerusalem, a typical Sign of the Son of man: proved by several Reasons. What meant by the coming of the Son of man in the Clouds. An especial difference noted between Divine and Vulgar Prophecies. The especial significancy and the excellent disclosure of the words of our Saviour's Prophecy, Mat. 24. 30. noted.

**A**pparitions, whether in the Air, of Armies, Castles, Dragons, Military Engines, and the like; or on Earth, of Spirits, in monstrous forms and disguises, or in a way of particular address to counsel or terrify, (numbred with Prodigies Preternatural) may perhaps appear Argument big enough to merit a more serious Disquisition than the foregoing Particulars: In which undertaking I may presume of Pardon, if (standing in no better light) I hit the But, though not the

the White, and deliver what may seem to approach nearest to the truth. And the better to serve distinctness of apprehension in this subject, I shall consider all the wonderful Impressions of the Airy Region, apart from the Apparitions of Spirits; though commonly inclosed under one and the same general title.

He that considers on the one hand, how common discourse and the Histories of all Times are stuffed out with Relations of what strange forms the Clouds have been sealed withal in several Ages, and the Tragical Events successive to such things; and on the other, that there is no one Argument wherein all the common causes of deceit, *Superstition, Melancholy, natural weakness of sight, softness of imagination, grossness of medium, fearfulness of temper, levity of Relators*, may more easily conspire to abuse his trust; will see some cause to affect concerning Prefages by such Airy Visions, what the Philosopher doth in the case of

*a Aristot. de  
Insomniis.*

Divination by Dreams: Περὶ τῆς μεθυστικῆς ἐν τοῖς ὕπνοις φαινομένης, καὶ λεγομένης συμβαίνει ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄνυμιον, ὅτι καὶ φρονήσαι βάλειον, ὅτι καὶ δύναι. Concerning Divination made in sleep, and said to happen by Dreams; it is a matter neither easy to despise, nor yet to be (upon good grounds) persmaded of: And thus the pretended attestation of a great experience,

and those lively and even speaking images of a War, on the one hand; and the several counter-reasons hereafter alledged, on the other, may seem, to first thoughts, sufficient to keep the Mind (like the Needle between two equal Magnets) from approaching the extrems of a forward faith or a very hasty distrust of Presages by any such Fantasm as these. I shall endeavor to divide the light from the darkness; Truth from Error in this matter, in these ensuing Propositions:

Propos. 1.

First, It is very probable that there have been some such Warlike Appearances in the Air, precedent to some great Desolations of Countries and Cities by Plagues or Wars. One example whereof we have tendred to our faith by an Author credited by <sup>b</sup> Apostolical citation, the <sup>c</sup> Writer of the Book of Maccabees, who speaking of Jerusalem, thus delivers himself:

<sup>b</sup> Heb. 11. 35.

36.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Book, ch. 5.

It hapned, that through all the City, for the space of almost forty days, there were seen Horsemen running in the Air, in cloth of Gold, and armed with Lances, like a band of Soldiers;

And Troops of Horsemen in array, encountering one against another, with shaking of Shields, and multitude of Pikes, drawing of Swords, and casting of Darts, and glittering of golden ornaments, and harness of all sorts,

Upon



Upon the mention of which Apparition, we there read what a sad Scene of Tragedies and Woes the City was made by the Armies of Antiochus. Upon which Apocryphal writing Cornet, a Lapidæ commenting, takes occasion to tell his Reader, that he remembred that when he was a Boy in the Low-Countries; some Ostenta of like condition were shewn him about the beginning of the Belgick Wars, *Ex his quo sapientes jam tum prænuñciaſſe quia Belgio inſtarent; &c.* And that from them wiſer men did even then foretel what calamities were approaching there; the truth of whose Predictions was justified by the iſſue of thoſe Signs. <sup>d</sup> Writers are ſo abundant in this Argument, that it is harder to be ſhort then prolix therein; as appears from the words of a great Trader in ſuch kind of ſlight wares, who having entertained his Reader with ſeveral examples of Spectres of Armies; and other Martial Images in the Firmament, given forth by God (as he ſpeaks) *tanquam in æſua indices*, as Monitors of his wrath, he adds; *Matta alia quæ in aſſertionis præpoſita confirmationem aſſerre ex variis Authoribus poſſem; omitto, quoniam præter Athlos, nix eſt qui de veritate hac ambigat.* A ſpeech that proves little beſide the Aſſertor's confidence, (the uſual attendant of Opinions which have the Authority of a multitude to bear themſelves upon.)

<sup>d</sup> Vid. Val. Max. de Prodig. l. 1. c. 6. Gaffarel Unheard of Curioſit. c. 12. Chriſtoph. à Caſtro l. 1. de Vatic. Natural. c. 17. <sup>e</sup> Gaſp. Schott. Phyiſic. curioſ. l. 6. c. 3.

However,

However, all this wind shakes none of our corn; we can allow what credit such Relations as these may in reason merit, without consulting shame to our Cause: all the pretended Experience being a covering much narrower than that the Opinion contended against can wrap it self therein. For Dreams, Oracles, Predictions of Augurs, Prophecies, had some shew of Experience (no doubt) to recommend their Observation, or else it is not easie to conceive how they could ever obtain such sacred regards among the Heathens of old, as it is evident they did amongst the most; were they therefore to be acknowledged *Signs* of God's institution? Let men first produce their strong Reasons or evident Scriptures to assure this title to them, and then they may be allowed to alledge Experience *ad corroborandum titulum*, further to strengthen this great title. Without such proof first produc'd, men may quickly worship the Devil in the mantle of *Samuel*, give the reverence of a divine Sign to some delusive Images of his setting up; except we should be so fond as to think that he may put fallacies upon us in our hearts, in our houses, upon Earth, but none by any such Pictures portrayed in the Airy Region, his proper Principality. All Experience that is utterly destitute of any solid Reason or Scripture to credit its observation, is a delusion

lusion of our own Fancy or the Devil.

Secondly, It seems highly probable that Propos. 2.

some Airy Apparitions were truly and really precedent to the Destruction of Jerusalem, and given by God as the intended Monitors of its near approach. For thus <sup>g</sup> Josephus re-

<sup>g</sup> 'Ιουδαϊκ.  
Αλωσ. λογ.  
5. κηφ. λα.

lates, that a little before the stones of emptiness were stretch'd out upon that City and Nation of the Jews, there appeared amongst other Prodigies ἀρμάδες καὶ παλὰ ἡγαστοὶ ἵπποι, ἡντινοὶ καὶ ἄρματα, Chariots and armed Troops of Horsemen issuing out of the Clouds, and intercepting the Heavens with their numerous Companies: which was received by himself, and others not so drunk with Pride and Opinion as the rest, a representation (ὡς ἐν τούτῳ) of the marching forth of the Great Lord of Hosts with all warlike appointments to take vengeance of that rebellious People. Nor do we trust the credit of so weighty a Relation with the single twine of Josephus his report, <sup>h</sup> Tacitus having seconded his Testimony with the like story, though omitting some other contemporary Prodigies extant in Josephus. Besides, He relates this (as he doth none of the rest) with a peculiar remark, telling his Reader, the Relation would seem too great for Belief, εἰ μὴ καὶ ὡσαύτως διασχευοῖς ἰστορίῃς, if it had not been related by several Eyewitnesses. But besides this, there is a four-

<sup>h</sup> Vise per ca-  
lum concurre-  
re acies, ruti-  
lantia arma,  
et subito nu-  
bium igne  
collucere Tem-  
plum. Histor.  
l. 5.

fold

fold Consideration which perswades me to receive this Relation, both as to the history and mystery thereof, with the favor of an high probability.

i Romphaa  
scil. de caelo  
Urbi immi-  
nens, flamma  
in Templo vi-  
sa, fores Tem-  
pli spontè a-  
perta curvus  
& armata  
phalanges  
conspicte in  
nubibus. Grot.  
in loc.

First, Our Blessed Savior prophesied that the Desolation of that People should be ushered by *once frightful Sights and great Signs from Heaven.* Luk. 21. 11. a Prediction which

i Expositors conceive expounded and fulfilled in this and some other Prodigious Accidents related by *Josephus* (and after him by *Eusebius*;) as the black and terrible Monitors of that unparallel Destruction which ensued. Sure I am this was a *Sight in Heaven*, and a *fearful Sight*, (for what more terrible then an Army in a warlike equipage? Cant. 6. 4.) and a *great Sign* it was, in it self, (*Josephus* calls it *Δαμνιον φανος*, an Apparition that had some characters of Divinity upon it, and which extended it self *ὡς τὰς ἡμέρας*, about all the Region,) and greater in its signification, as will appear before we dismiss the Consideration thereof.

2. The fearful Destruction of Jerusalem was a kind of visible Prophecy and Type of the final Destruction of the World. For we find Christ's coming to judge the wicked Nation of the Jews call'd his coming in Glory, and coming in the Clouds, Dan. 7. 10, 13.

Revel. 1. 7.

the

the Day of the Lord, *Mal. 3. 1, 2. Joel 2. 31.*  
 and his coming in his Kingdom, *Mat. 16. 28.*  
 Phrases which often character the Judgment  
 of the Great Day. Now then, that the  
 Sign and the thing signified might the more  
 exactly touch, as at the last Day, *the Hea-*  
*vens shall be on fire, the Earth with all its*  
*Works be burnt up, and the whole Creation*  
 feel its final and most dreadful pangs; so  
 fit it was that the Destruction of *Ferusalem*  
 should be ushered by its fearful Sights, migh-  
 ty Earthquakes, a fiery Sword, *the Sea and*  
*the Waves roaring, &c.* And as at the last  
 Day the <sup>k</sup> Angels shall be the Ministers of  
 his Justice, and increase the terrors of his  
 coming, by attending the Judge of quick and  
 dead; so this Judgment upon *Ferusalem*  
 came with the solemnity of Angelical Appa-  
 ritions represented in this Vision as in Scrip-  
 ture, by <sup>l</sup> Chariots, <sup>m</sup> and mighty Hosts. And  
 as Christ's second coming shall be <sup>n</sup> personal-  
 ly in the Clouds, attended with <sup>o</sup> Angels  
 and the voice of a Trumpet; so (that the  
 Type may carry the more lively figures of  
 the Antitype) it seems not unreasonable to  
 believe, that He came to the Destruction of  
*Ferusalem* in the Clouds of Heaven, with  
 that Heavenly Host, either really or in ef-  
 figie, and probably with the solemnity of  
 the voice of that Military Instrument, the  
 Trumpet. In short, some of the Prodigies  
 preceding

<sup>k</sup> Mat. 16. 27.

<sup>S.</sup> Jud. ep. v.

<sup>14.</sup>

<sup>Mat.</sup> 25. 31.

<sup>l</sup> Psa. 68. 17.

<sup>m</sup> 2 King. 6.

<sup>17.</sup>

<sup>Gen.</sup> 3. 2.

<sup>Luk.</sup> 2. 13.

<sup>n</sup> Act. 1. 9. 11.

<sup>o</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 52

<sup>1</sup> Thes. 4. 16,

<sup>17.</sup>



*Orac. sibyl.*  
l. 3.

preceding the fates of *Jerusalem*, seem such equal and proportioned representatives of those more terrible disguizes which the face of Nature must put on at that last and great Day, that the so called *P. Sibylline Oracles* make choice of many of them to describe and foreshew the horrors of it by: telling us we may know the end of all things to be at hand.

*Cum visi fuerint cæli stellantis in oris  
Nocturni gladii, casus ad solis & ortus,  
Pulvis & e cælo terram descendet in omnem,  
Protinus & medio cursu lux aurea Solem  
Deseret, & terram fulgenti lumine Luna  
Sanguineis guttis stillantibus irradiabit,  
Signaque saxa dabunt, & in alta prælia nube  
Cernetis peditumque equitumque sonantibus  
auris.*

And *Lib. 4.*

*Enses atque tubæ simul, & Sole exoriente  
Terribilem sonitum, mugitumq; audiet omnis  
Mundus-----*

Which words I find thus rendred by one of our own Poets:

*Swords in the spangled Heav'ns shall then by  
night*

*In th' East and West extend their blazing  
light.*

*Ashes in show'rs upon the Earth shall fall,  
Luster desert the Sun in height of all*

*His*

His tow'ring pitch, the Moon shall then look  
 red,  
 And tears of Blood from her dark Chariot  
 shed.  
 Hard Rocks shall groan; Arm'd Troops of  
 Foot and Horse  
 Incounter in the Air with horrid force.  
 Arms, Trumpets, fearful frugers, yelling cries,  
 All Ears shall hear about the Sun's uprise.

Of which and the like Passages therein oc-  
 curring, some (presuming upon the pre-  
 tended Antiquity of those Oracles) conceive  
 the strange Prodigies related by *Ovid* (not  
 as an Historian but a Poet) to be but an imi-  
 tation; so great the agreement between  
 them both in phrase and matter.

Whereas there is a much greater proba-  
 bility that the Author of these pretended  
 Oracles plundered *Ovid*; these having been  
 written (as many other spurious Pieces pre-  
 tending to Inspiration, in the first Ages of  
 the Church) about three or fourscore years  
 after the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; as ap-  
 pears past the air of a Question from what  
*Blondellus*, *Opsopaus*, and others have  
 written concerning them: though the Au-  
 thors of them had put the often halting feet  
 of their Oracular Verses into such old clout-  
 ed shoes, the disguise of such antick names,  
 phrases, times, and places, that they were  
 verily

*V. Sandys*  
 Translat.

*Ovid. Met.*  
 l. 15.

Begin-  
 ing with  
*Arma ferunt*  
*inter nigras*  
*crepitantia*  
*nubes.*

*Terribilesque*  
*tubas, &c.*  
 l. 15. *Met.*

*Blondel.*  
 Treat. of the  
*Sibyls.*

*Opsop. in*  
*præfat. ad*  
*Orac. Sibyl.*

verily thought by some of the less suspicious Ancients (as the *Gibeonites* by the *Israelites*) to have come from far, even from beyond the Times of *Moses*. As for the Verses already cited, they plainly appear to owe themselves to the rude jumbling together of the Prodigies precedent to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, the words of *S. Peter*, *Act. 2. 20.* concerning the turning of the *Sun* into darkness, and the *Moon* into blood, not being rightly understood; and some *Ethnick* *astrologers* intermix'd, to render the forgery the less transparent. As for the mention of *Trumpets*, together with *Arms*, heard about the *Sun's* arise, I am apt to believe, it might grow from a circumstance in that *Airy Spectre* (the noise of *Trumpets*) omitted by *Josephus*, who tells us indeed that it appeared *very* *in* *Novis*, before the setting of the *Sun*, (which, for a disguise, the Oracles have altered into the rising of it) but without any notice given of any such new character of terror attendant thereupon.

Thirdly, *God's Works* of a more publick and catholic concern, have been generally ushered by some lighter Essays and representations of them. Thus the several appearances of *God* of old in the figures of a *Man*, are commonly received as the *Prælude*, and a kind of *μυχαὶ τελευτῇ* to that great Mystery of



be (according to the methods of Divine Providence) some slender scheme and representation of (the strangest work, considered in all its circumstances, God ever did) the final Destruction of *Jerusalem* by the *Roman* Armies, and in that, of the solemnity of that Day when *the Thrones of Judgment shall be set, and the Judg with \* ten thousand times ten thousand ministering unto him*, proceed to his last Act of Justice upon the unrighteous World.

\* Dan. 7. 10.

Fourthly, *The peculiar circumstances of those Times, if duly considered, will give this Prodigy, together with the supposed significance of it, the appearance of a very great probability*: Into a right understanding whereof, that we may leap with the greater advantage, our rising ground must be a little the higher.

It is a strange instance of the Perverseness of the *Jewish* Nation, and of that judicial, with which God punish'd their affected, blindness, that *Bar-Chosba* should in the Times of *Adrian* meet with so forward an acknowledgment and assistance from them, as the true *Messiah*, while yet (as

*Vi. Raymund. Pug. fid. P. 2. c. 4. p. 257.*

*Maimonides* tells us) *לֹא שָׁאֵלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ חֲכָמִים* *their Wise-men* his followers *never asked a Sign or Miracle from him* to bear testimony to him. They greedily swallowed him without any chewing.

But



But though the true *Messias* had given them repeated Signs and Wonders, (but such as sorted best to that gentle Oeconomy he was to introduce) they were still unsatisfied, and oft came <sup>a</sup>requesting <sup>b</sup>requiring *a Sign from Heaven* of Him, to assure them that He was  $\delta' \text{Ερχόμενος}$  the Person the Prophecies and Expectations of that Nation were so much upon: Where, by *a Sign from Heaven*, they might possibly mean some immediate Manifestation *from*, or miraculous Impression *upon* Heaven above; as thinking perhaps either that then the reputation of the Miracle would come the more unstained by any suspicion of Witchcraft, Art, Power of Imagination, or any Collusion whatsoever to assist it; or that the Person and Kingdom of the true *Messiah* ought in reason to come attested by Signs of as great lustre as those with which the former Prophets and present Oeconomy had been heretofore; viz. <sup>c</sup>*the speaking of* <sup>e</sup>Exod. 20. 22. *God from Heaven*, <sup>d</sup>*the descent of the fire* <sup>d</sup>1 Chro. 21. <sup>26.</sup> *from Heaven upon the holy Offering*, <sup>e</sup>*Bread* <sup>2</sup>King. 1. 10. <sup>e</sup>Exod. 16. 4. *given from Heaven* (which they tacitly require our Savior to give them, *Jo. 6. 30, 31.*) <sup>f</sup>*mighty Thundrings and Lightnings from* <sup>f</sup>Exod. 20. 18. *Heaven, or* <sup>g</sup>*the stopping of the Sun in Heaven.* <sup>g</sup>Josh. 10. 12.

But I conceive that they had some further aim in those words; requiring (in short) to see Him (if the true *Messiah*) coming to them,

h Dan. 7. 13.

not in that humility and weakness, but with Power and Glory in the Clouds of Heaven, and the Thrones of Majesty ready placed to receive his approach, as that Sign from Heaven with which they would sit down resolved: commonly grounding the Perswasion of some such Sign to distinguish the *Messiah* by, upon the words of <sup>h</sup> Daniel: *I beheld till the Thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, &c. I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the Clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and there was given to him Dominion and Glory, and a Kingdom.*

That the *Jews* in our Savior's time generally understood that Prophecy of the *Messiah*, appears from his own frequent use of that Expression *Son of Man* as of a Phrase familiarly known amongst that People. And that it was the Perswasion of the most, that his Coming should be solemn and pompous, *in the Clouds of Heaven*, appears probable from the gloss of one of their ancient Masters upon that Text, cited by <sup>i</sup> Raymundus;

i Raymund.  
Pug. Fid.  
Par. 2. c. 5.  
p. 276.

זכר עם ענני שמיא וכו'

*Si meruerint Judæi, veniet in nubibus cæli:* that is (as Raymundus explains his words) *If the Jews deserved that the Messias should come, He shall come gloriously according to the*

the Prophecy of Daniel. And then He tells us further, *Ideo Moderni Judæi dicunt Messiam non venisse, quia nondum viderunt eum venire in nubibus cæli*: a Prejudice against our Savior derived from their Ancestors, in all likelihood, down to Posterity among many other Traditional Errors. And perhaps we may discover some footsteps of this vulgar Notion in that <sup>k</sup> Speech of our Sa- <sup>k</sup> Mat. 26.64. vior to the High-Priest, who adjuring him to tell him whether *He were the Christ the Son of God*, answered, *Thou hast said. Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of Power & coming in the Clouds of Heaven*. Of which words the most natural and unforc'd sense seems to be this; *That I am the Christ the Son of God, is a great Truth, and assured sufficiently already by my own mighty works, serious acknowledgments, and the secret perswasions of your own minds: Nevertheless, as a further sanction thereof, I tell you, you shall very suddenly see that Sign (without which you will not sit down perswaded) spoken of by Daniel, Me the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and Majesty*. Moreover, we may observe that when the Disciples demanded of our Savior *a Sign of his Coming* (by which it is more then probable that they understood onely some such pompous appearance,

1 Mat. 24. 29.  
30.

first in Heaven, and then on Earth, as the *Jews* commonly dream'd of) He tells them, *Immediately after the tribulation of those days* (of which he had even now prophesied) *the Sun shall be darkned, &c. and then shall appear*  $\delta\ \sigma\upsilon\mu\phi\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  *that eminent Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall all the Tribes of the Earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory.* In which words our Savior seems to express himself suitably to the common Opinions and Phrases of that People, and to acknowledg such a glorious *Coming of the Son of Man in the Clouds of Heaven* (as his great sign) was foretold, and had a great truth therein, but onely the *Jews* had very much mis-timed and mis-reported the maner and season of it. Add to this, that it can scarce seem probable that all those mighty Wonders which our Savior wrought, *raising the dead, cleansing the lepers with a word, &c.* should not be thought by the *Jews*, in some general sense, *Signs from Heaven*; that is, wrought by the Power of God, perhaps to try their constancy: Onely they had reserved the title of a *Sign from Heaven*, by way of eminence, for this which their hearts were so much upon; a Sign which never any of the old Prophets were dignified by, and in compare with which all other Signs were but as *populus*

*lus terra*, of no name and reckoning in their childish thoughts. From all this it is a probable inference, That the *Jewish Nation* expected some such splendid Sign as this, and that in some sense and season it was to be given as the Sign of the *Messias* his glorious Exaltation in Heaven, of which the World had received but one particular Sign, <sup>m</sup> The Mission of the Holy Ghost.

m Acts 2: 33.

The great Question then depending is, When this *Sign of the Son of Man* was given, and when the frequent Prediction of his Coming in the Clouds received its full accomplishment? I answer, It was probably fulfilled typically, in the literal sense thereof, in this glorious representation of a Captain with his numerous Legions issuing out of the Clouds a little before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*. For the visible characters of Majesty stamped upon that Airy Fantasm speak it big enough for the honor of being received at least as the umbratile Sign and Coming of the Son of Man. So vast the numbers of these Chariots and armed Troops in the Air, that they appeared (saith *Josephus*) *κυκλῶμεναι τὰς πόλεις*, *encompassing the Cities of Judea*, and the whole Heaven seemed for a time but a kind of *Campus Martius* to receive them. And whereas it is foretold that his Coming should be *with Power and great Glory*, [where, by *δύναμις* *Grotius* under-



- n 2 Thef. 1.7. understands the <sup>n</sup> Host of Angels, and by  
 Mat. 16.27. δόξα *fulgorem aspectabilem* some visible  
 lustre and splendor,] where can we find a  
 more lively Portraiture of both then in this  
 Divine Impression: those numerous Troops  
 fitly representing *the Power*; and the *ruti-*  
 o Tacit. Hist. l.5. *lantia arma* (the expression of <sup>n</sup> *Tacitus* de-  
 scribing this Airy Vision) glittering Arms  
 and splendid equipage in which they appear-  
 ed, the great *Glory* of his coming to judg  
 p Joh. 16.11. *Jerusalem*, p the Prince of this World, and  
 all the Earth at the last Day. Besides, The  
 special circumstance of time by which *this*  
*Sign and Coming* of the Son of Man is cha-  
 racter'd doth somewhat incourage our Opi-  
 nion of this appearance: for our Savior  
 speaking thereof to the High-Priest and the  
 q Mat. 26.64. *Jews*, tells them, ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἀπὸ νῦν, From this  
 r Luk. 22.69. moment, or as <sup>t</sup> S. Luke renders it, ἀπὸ νῦν,  
 from this very *Now* shall ye see the Son of  
 Man, &c. Expressions surely denoting a  
 very near approach of that glorious Sign,  
 and not to be totally deferred (as many Ex-  
 positors contend) till the Day of his second  
 s Chap. 24.29. Coming. And S. <sup>s</sup> *Matthew* doth more di-  
 stinctly determine the time thereof in those  
 words; *Immediately after the tribulation of*  
*those days shall the Sun be darkned, and the*  
*Moon shall not give her light, &c.* that is,  
 Very suddenly after those lesser and prelu-  
 sory Judgments *in those days* of the not yet  
 expired

expired *Jewish* Oeconomy (of which I have now forewarned you) which were but as the eclipsing and clouding of the Sun and Moon, shall ensue a final Desolation (like the total blotting out of the Lights of Heaven.)

And then, about that unhappy juncture, as

that word in this Chapter, and other Prophetic Writings, signifies: *shall appear the Sign*, the pledg of his Exaltation in Heaven, and the visible representation of his coming forth in the Clouds of Vengeance

to execute the sentence of Justice past upon that condemned Nation. A time that suits very well with that in which this Divine Fantasm is supposed to have hapned.

Moreover it seems a *decorum* to conceive that this Prophecy of the *Coming* of the Son of Man *in Power* was fulfilled once in the type and letter, and again in the virtue and substance thereof (which I am immediately to shew,) because the Prophecy of his coming *in weakness* [ *A Star shall come out of*

*Jacob, and a Scepter shall arise out of Israel* ]

had its typical and literal accomplishment in that New Star which was the *Index* of Heaven to the place of his Birth, and of which the <sup>u</sup> Wise-men seemed soly to understand it; and also its substantial One in the rise of Him who was *the bright and morning Star*.

*Tóre, i.e. circa ista tempora. Ita enim solet toré laxius accipi. Grot. Not. in Mat. 24. 9.*

*Num. 24. 17.*

<sup>u</sup> *Vid. Orig. cont. Cels. l. 1. p. 43, 46.*

The contexture of this Discourse will perhaps

Dr. Hammond Not. in  
Mat. 24.30.

perhaps be the less subject to ravel out, if I hem it with the Speech of our learned and pious Annotator upon those words, *the Sign of the Son of Man*: *This οὐρανός* (saith He) *may possibly signifie some special Prodigy that should fall about that time, attending on that Destruction of Jerusalem.* Josephus mentions many, &c. But unwilling he seems to abide by the Conjecture, *because this Sign is said to have hapned after the tribulation of those days*; that is (saith he) *the distress and siege of Jerusalem.* But here, *eadem manus Vulnus opemque*, his Paraphrase understanding that word  $\mu\tau$  to refer to those lesser tribulations forementioned, which ushered the *darkning of the Sun*, &c. that is (as he rightly expounds) *the total Destruction of the Temple, City and whole Jewish Government Civil and Ecclesiastical.*

I intend not in these words to determine this Prediction of *the Sign and Coming of the Son of Man in the Clouds*, within the scanty limits of this ineffective Type in the Air; For it had a more pompous accomplishment in the mystical sense thereof, when He went forth to that most eminent Act of Royalty after his solemn inauguration to his Mediatory Kingdom, the judging of that Rebel-People: for (as Grotius notes from Maimonides) *Descensus Dei in nube, solet in scripturis iram & vindictam significare.*  
And

And besides, the Prophet *Daniel*, to whose words our Savior's Prophecy hath an apparent reference (though our learned Criticks take no notice thereof) <sup>w</sup> prophecies of this <sup>w</sup> Dan. 7. 9. *Coming of the Son of Man in the Clouds,* <sup>10. 13.</sup> together with the mention of a *Judgment set, and the Books opened, and Thrones cast down.* But the Prediction shall have its full and perfect accomplishment at the last Day, when the Son of Man shall come (<sup>x</sup> as he <sup>x</sup> Acts 1. 11. went) literally in the Clouds of Heaven; and mystically too, because appearing in storms of vengeance against those which obeyed not his righteous Laws. It is the peculiar excellency of Divine Prophecies, that they come down into the World (as the *Chaldee Oracle* saith the Souls of good and wise men do) *πολυ ἐσάρμαυ νῦν, clothed about with a great deal of mind and sense;* and therefore have their repeated accomplishments; whereby they are divinely distinguish'd from vulgar Prophecies (which vain men run after as Children after a gaudy Butterfly) which are delivered without more of mystery than the necessary obscurity of their Phrase may intitle them unto.

As for the Prophecy now before our consideration, *Τότε φανήσεται ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν νεφέλῃ, καὶ ὄψονται αὐτόν πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔσεται ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ, καὶ ἔσονται μετ' αὐτοῦ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔσεται ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ, καὶ ἔσονται μετ' αὐτοῦ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔσεται ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ, καὶ ἔσονται μετ' αὐτοῦ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.* as it hath (I conceive) this treble accomplishment, so the words wherein it is delivered are so wisely

wisely chosen and disposed, that they may without straining be construed in favor of them all : for that word φανήσεθ' signifies a fantastical and real appearing, *Ἐμφαν* both a representation and a token, and *ὄψον* supposeth sometimes for bodily sometimes for mental sight ; (three words made use of by *Josaphus* in the relation of this Prodigy ; ) and therefore very fitly expressive both of the typical and substantial accomplishment of this Prophecy. And as happily will the order of the words serve the Perswasion of this treble accomplishment : for if *ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ* be construed with *Ἐμφαν* thus, *then shall appear the Sign in Heaven, of the Son*, they carry a fair aspect toward the Prodigious Appearance in Heaven, the typical accomplishment of them : If with *ὃς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*, thus, *then shall appear the Sign, of the Son of Man in Heaven*, they refer to his coming in judgment against *Jerusalem*, the great Sign of his Exaltation, as a Prince as well as a Savior, in Heaven. But if *in the Heaven* be referred equally to *Sign* and *Son of Man*, the words will carry a clear reference to his last Appearance, which shall be really <sup>2</sup> in the Heaven, and the last Sign of his being that true Son of Man mentioned by the Prophets.

γ φάσμα, π  
δαμόνιον  
ὡφθῇ μείζον  
πίστει εἰ μὴ  
τὰ ἐπακοῦσ-  
θήσαντα πᾶσι  
τῶν σημείων  
ἀξία. Ἀλλως,  
λ. σ. κ. λα.

† 1 Thel. 4.  
16, 17.

† Mar. 24. 30.

I shall dismiss this <sup>a</sup> Prophetick Text when I have noted, how it presents to us (in the



the latitude wherein expounded) our Bleſſed Savior at once ſatisfying and chaſtiſing the perverſe humor of the *Jews*: for he gave them a viſible *Sign of the Son of Man from Heaven*, but a Sign of him not ſo much as a glorious Savior, as of a revengeful Judg: being dealt withal herein as God with the nicer *Iſraelites*, who would not be ſatisfied with Manna from Heaven, but would have fleſh from thence too: <sup>b</sup> *He gave them their* <sup>b</sup> *Pſa. 106. 15.* *request, but ſent leanneſſ withal into their Soul.* From all this it appears, that this Prodigious Sign *which* was given, and the ſeaſon *when*, are hugely ſingular and extraordinary, and that therefore it is unnatural to conclude any thing thence in favor of the Opinion to which I oppoſe my ſelf. It is a good Maxim, *Examples extraordinary neither break a Rule nor make one.*

## SECT. III.

*Strange Sights in the Air, proved no Divine Signs.*

*Five Considerations to evince strange Forms in the Air, no Divine Signs.* 1. We have no warrant from the Scriptures so to receive them. Negative proofs from Scripture when considerable. What kind of Signs of old made choice of by God. 2. Such supposed Signs would expose men to perpetual delusion. That made appear upon many accounts. God alway careful to have that fully proved which he would have strongly believed. 3. Such Fantasms have been sometimes known not succeeded by any Tragical Events. Negative instances to be especially attended to in the founding of Maxims, and why. 4. Many of these Airy Appearances salvable by a natural cause: the cause proposed: asserted against Cabeus. 5. Some of the more artificial Impressions in the Air seem effected by the Devil. The end of them; assigned by Cabeus, proved absurd and unworthy of God. Good Angels evinc'd no causes of these things. All God's extraordinary Works carry unquestionable Characters of Divinity: the ends the Devil hath to serve upon such Prodigies. Lavater's judgment of them rejected.

**I** Proceed now more closely to press the Opinion I am contending with, in this third Proposition: *There appears not now any ground at all to receive any such Apparitions in the Air as the Divine Monitors of any Calamities to ensue upon a Nation.* And that,

First, *Because we have no warrant from the Book of God so to regard them, or any other Prodigy.* Let our Adversaries shew us the least air of Precept or Example therein to oblige us hereunto, and we will be concluded.

cluded. We find indeed some Signs of future Events mentioned therein, but they were *either purely miraculous*, as the<sup>e</sup> going<sup>e</sup> Isai. 38.6,7. back of the Sun in the days of *Hezekiah* as a sign of his deliverance from sickness and enemies; *or particularly instituted*, as *Saul's* <sup>f</sup>meeting of three men carrying Kids and <sup>f</sup> 1 Sam. 10.3. Wine and Bread as the sign of his being appointed by God to the Kingdom: and <sup>g</sup> *signa* g 1 Kin. 13.3. <sup>ad placitum</sup>, such arbitrary Signs as carried <sup>2</sup> 2 Kin. 19.29. no similitudes of the things whereof they <sup>Jer. 44.29.</sup> 2 Kin. 13.18. were the Signs (as the Apparitions of Armies do of some succeeding War) that so none might be encouraged afterward to regard them as Ominous when again occurring. But hath it any where so far inhanç'd the reputation of a Monster, or the antick shapes of the Clouds, as to prefer them a kind of civil Sacraments, the outward and visible Signs, of some (as yet) invisible Judgment? *Herodotus* and *Machiavel* have been quoted, but where the Scripture? Now a negative Argument from Scripture is conclusive enough in a matter wherein the faith of a Divine Prescience and Providence, Man's dutiful observance of God in the way of his Judgments, Religion and the great good of Men, are so much assisted and concerned as we are told they are in the Religious Observation of such things as these. It cannot easily be imagined how much Peace and

and Truth would bless the World, if men would resolve once in *Philosophy* not believe beyond what is proved; and in *Divinity* <sup>h</sup> not be wise above what is written.

<sup>h</sup> 1 Cor. 4. 6.

Secondly, *Such kind of Signs would lay men naked and exposed to perpetual delusions and impostures*: For how oft do the odd figures of the Clouds serve the imaginations of Dragons, Castles or Armies in the Air? Can any serious Person then believe that God would have us apply our selves to such a *Proteus* as a Cloud is for a solution of any doubt concerning the future, which can so easily shift into any odd shapes of things? Moreover great Affections (which govern the most) are hugely Poetical, and quickly inchant the inward house, making things appear there in the Opinion of realities, which are nothing but shadow and air. The <sup>i</sup> Philosopher well notes, *That we are easily deceived about the objects of sense, when in the power of any great passion, one in this and others in another, the timorous person in fear, and the enamored by love*: so that from a very slender resemblance one shall fancy he sees armed men, and the other that he sees his Mistress, and conceit any rude lines upon the wall to carry some airs of her face. Now how full of passion doth ignorance, guilt, and the want of discipline, make the far greater part of those Spectators upon whose testimony

ἰ Παθίως  
ἰ πατωμένη  
τοὺς τὰς αἰ-  
σθησεὶς ἐν τοῖς  
πάθεσιν ὄν-  
τες ἄλλοι  
δ' ἐν ἄλλοις  
ὁ δὲ ἐν τῷ  
φόβῳ, ὁ δὲ  
ἐρωπικὸς ἐν  
ἐρωπῇ, ὥστε δὲ  
καὶ ἀπὸ μι-  
κροῦς ὁσίου  
τῷ ἢ μὲν  
πολεμίας ὁ-  
ραῖν τὸ ἢ τὸ ἐ-  
ρώμενον. ὅτι  
De Insom.  
c. 3.

mony the credit of such Relations are generally built: Besides, a very busie and impressive *Imagination* may so prepossess the rays of our eyes, that they shall represent things but according as instructed by *that* to do: it is with Sights as with Sounds, they are oftentimes but *when* and *what* men think. That word עָנָן *Zech. 10. 1.* which we render *Clouds*, the *LXX*, by a verbal mistake of the true *radix*, translate φαντασιαι Apparitions or Visions: and a melancholy Fancy is as subject to this *real* mistake, the translating of *Clouds* into Apparitions and Visions of Dragons, Churches, or Armies. But if the Fancy should not put any such fallacy upon the Eye, yet the Air, the Scene of such Airy Visions, often will: for the many vapors and exhalations therein, through the unequal disposeure of their parts, occasion various refractions of the light falling from the Heavenly Bodies upon them, and by consequence give the Eye a great variety of rude Images: for so we find upon Earth, that in the Twilight or Moon-shine strange figures of things will appear to us, which are but the delusive issues of the various commixtures of lights and shadows. And therefore I question not but a little skill in Opticks would have enabled men to give a very consistent account of many of those strange *Idola* in the Air, which from



the attestation of a few gross and ignorant Spectators have been entred with so much solemnity in the many Registers of Prodigious Occurrences. Now then can any man easily believe that God hath obliged us to a devout attendance to these things as his Signs, of the truth whereof it is (upon all these accounts) so extreamly difficult to arrive at full assurance? Hath he not all along appeared to value our Understandings at an higher rate, then to require them to a religious regard of things at all exposed to the suspicion of some imposture? These are matters wherein a knowing man will not easily trust his own eyes, which may quickly report their own Passions to him, but (for ought he knows) nothing with certainty besides; much less can he safely trust his Faith with the relation of another, whose weakness of eyes or mind may possibly be greater then his own.

Thirdly, *Such kind of Airy Fantasms have been known not succeeded by any black and tragical Event.* The truth is, Wisdom (which useth to draw her lines by the steady and even Rule of some well-assumed Principles) hath not appeared so critical an Observer of such Accidents and their Events, as Folly hath been; and therefore we are not so well provided of Examples to reprehend this vanity, as otherwise we might be.

I must

See Luk. 1. 4  
Joh. 6. 69.  
2 Pet. 1. 19.  
1 Joh. 1. 1, 2.  
Heb. 6. 18.

I must therefore satisfy my self with a single instance which occurs in a learned and sober Writer, who delivers it as matter reported to him by Persons of good credit, how that in the year before he recorded that Relation, there were seen two opposite Battalions in the Air, lancing out their Spears, and discharging as it were their Muskets, victory now reeling, and in the end one side giving chase to the other. Whereas all these things proved but *ex vitro fulgura*, flash without shot, being followed onely with the voice of joy and peace in our dwellings for many years. Nor can they be with any color of Reason presumed to foreshew our succeeding Civil Wars, being removed by the distance of so many years: so little of truth is there in that Speech of a late curious Writer, discoursing of such Military Images in the Air: *This is most certain, that we never fail of seeing the Event to answer the Sign.*

*Sandys  
Translat.  
Ovid. l. 15.  
p. 291.*

*Ann. 1629.*

*m Gaffarel.  
Unheard-of  
Curiosit.  
P. 4. c. 12.*

Now one Negative instance will appear (if duly weighed) of far more force to unfix a pretending Rule, then two Affirmative to establish it: because the latter (the World being so full of evils and changes) may fall out by an easie chance, or by the Agency of seducing Spirits upon an easie foresight of some approaching Battel; whereas the Negative seems to proclaim some necessity of the Event in Nature, and the no Purpose at

*In omni Axi-  
omate vero  
constituendo,  
major est vis  
instantiæ ne-  
gatiuæ. Bac.  
Org. Aph. 46.*

all of God to prefer any such emergencies the Signs of any of his Counsels; the Signs of his appointing being never *tinkling Cymbals*, that make onely a noise in the World, and nothing else. In all Knowledge which bottoms upon Experience Men should be so faithful to themselves and Truth as to attend indifferently to any kind of Instances before they offer to advance a Maxim. This is the cause of that obstinate dotage upon *Astrology, Dreams, Prophecies, Palmistry, Presages by this and other Prodigies*, even a custom to observe when they hit, but never when they miss; growing from a resolution in men to be blind and deaf to what ever disparageth a Proposition that hath pleasure or a great prejudice to endear it to them, or from that stilness and silence which attends all Events which have nothing of rarity and uniformity to call the eyes of men upon them.

Fourthly, *I doubt not but many of these Airy Apparitions might be salved by a natural Cause.* Some assign the natural Cause onely the reflexion of the figures of Armies fighting or marching here on Earth, reflected from the smooth surface of a Cloud as from a Looking-glass: but because the angles of incidence and reflexion must necessarily be often varied by the giddy figures and motions of the Clouds, we cannot easily

§.3. *Of Prodigies Praternatural.*

filly understand how they can serve to reflect so evenly and so long together the same equal Images; and because, though a Cloud could at such a distance reflect the military figures of an Army, yet not the terrible noises thereof, we shall dismiss this conceit as at best but an ingenious vanity. It carries a fairer shew of probability, that the supposed firing of Ordnance and Muskets is nothing but the coruscation of some incensed Exhalations breaking forth by pauses and intervals from the Clouds, and (as Thunder doth) with the noises and terrors of those Military Engines. The running to and fro of Horsemen and armed Companies may be represented to an active Fancy by the Clouds of differing colors carried by the uncertain force of the Winds to very unequal figures. The stands of Pikes and Spears may possibly be but the ragged and deformed protuberances of the disturbed Clouds. Onely I am apt to believe the representations of these things are in themselves so rude, that men are forc'd much to quicken the deadness of the Types by the fictions of Imagination: for those odd noises in the Air, which the Ancients called but the sounding of Trumpets, and the rattling of Armor, have (since the Invention of Guns hath suborned their Fancies) been thought the discharging of Muskets and great Pieces,

n Pomponat.  
de Incant.  
c. 4, & 10.

Now that these Apparitions in the Air arise from the figures of condens'd Vapors (as those on Earth of condens'd Air) appears very probable from the Relation of<sup>n</sup> Pomponatus concerning them, *That they are observed but in the night, or early in the morning, or toward the close of the day*: the Reason whereof seems to be this; The Air at those seasons is more replete with gross Vapors, which by the uneven disposure of their parts send varieties of odd Images to the Eye, which all vanish when once the light and heat of the Sun grow strong enough to banish from the Air all those impostrous shadows and vapors which did produce them.

o Exo. 32. 24.  
p Quod casu  
confluant fumosi  
halitus ut represen-  
tent homines  
armatos &  
elasses instru-  
ctas ad pugna,  
imo & praeli-  
antes, videtur  
non solum casu  
dictu, sed sine  
ulla mentis  
advertentia.  
Cabeus, l. 3.  
Meteorol. T.  
29. q. 2. Jon-  
ston. Thaum-  
tol. claf. 3. c. ult.

I am well aware that this account of these terrible Forms in the Heavens carries no more color of likelihood in the eye of some men, then that which Aron gave of the original of the Idol; ° *I cast it (the gold) into the fire, and out came this Calf*. They readily acknowledg the matter whereof those Images are made to be such coarse Vapors and Clouds as have been mentioned; but the difficulty (say they) is, *what hand formed them into such lively figures? For that movable vapors should by chance conspire and join together, so as to represent armed men and Navies ready appointed for fight, yea actually fighting, seems spoken not onely*  
by



*by chance, but without any due use and application of mind in this matter.* I answer, The Forms of these Heavenly Impressions are not always drawn upon the Clouds with that distinctness and fulness of resemblance as it is pretended: the figures of the Clouds oft carry but some dull and rude representations of Armies or Ships which Fancy quickly licks into more comely shapes: and many of the Prodigious Forms in the Heavens are (like the monstrous issues of *Ixion* in the Poet) begotten between a Man and a Cloud, the Poetical Imagination of the Beholder, and some more general and heavy resemblances in the Cloud. But because there are some Appearances in the Air, which stories make faith of, whose singularities of figure, season, continuance, this Philosophical account may seem unable to salve; I further add,

Fifthly, *It is very probable that some of these strange impressions and noises in the Air are owing to the power and operation of the Airy Principality.* Many of them are managed with that method and artifice, carry that life of imitation, come forth in such chosen seasons, and continue for so many hours (if the importunity of Historians in this matter be of any consideration) that any blind and fatal causes seem greatly disproportioned for such Effects carrying so many

plain characters of counsel and design. God therefore (saith our fore-cited Author) can onely in reason be intituled to them; to the

*q* Ut istis ludicris spectandis nos erudiat ad impietate debellandam & det metuentibus se significationem ut fugiant à facie arcus & liberentur Electi. Cabens, ub, sup.

end *that by such ludicrous Sights he may instruct us to Piety, and may give those that fear him a Sign that they may fly from the hurtful Sword; and so his Elect may be delivered.*

But certainly this is (to return to his own reproach) *casu dictum*, if ever speech were.

For I would demand; Are the Elect to whom the Sign is given alway known to others or to themselves? Are they distinguish'd by their cause in civil differences? Are they here (as at the last Day) all on a side? Or if they be known, would he have them run away and leave the wicked, the World can better spare, to fight it out till they may come again? Would he have men desert their stations, and (under color of being warned of God) not to assist their King and Country, when any such ludicrous sights (as he calls them) should appear from Heaven? Doth not this speech not onely excuse, but sanctifie Cowardise, and even supply the Coward with an holy *Ephod* to hide his Sword in; for he is supposed, in flying from the hurtful Sword, to be at God's beck, and to serve the dispensation. Besides, suppose it be a Sign of an approaching War, is it a Sign of a Defeat too? if not, the Elect may chance to run away rather from

Honor

Honor then Danger : or if it do preface a Defeat, whose fatal sentence doth it pronounce ? Need we not some other Prodigy to unriddle the dark and perplex'd meaning of this ? The Historian mentions several Prodigious Events just before *Cæsar* and *Pompey* join'd Battel ; amongst others he relates, that there were heard αἱ ἡχοὶ τῶν στρατοπέδων, *the sounds of Armies in the Air* : but after all he adds, ὅτι οὐδὲν ὀπορίας ὦν περὶ αὐτοῦ, διεδήλυνε : *it could not certainly be known from them to which of the two destruction was foreshewn*. It is not therefore to speak of God by chance and without aim, to attribute such Signs to him as signifie nothing with certainty to those for whose sake they are supposed to be given ? To ascribe an insignificant Sign to God, is to blaspheme Him by a contradiction.

And how solid soever it may seem to the first touch, that Opinion will appear as transparent, if brought to the light, which attributes all these Military Forms in the Air to the courtesie of good Angels, designing (in imitation of the Divine Philanthropy) to warn Mankind of some approaching Desolation, that so they may arm themselves with Patience to entertain its coming. We never find in the Book of God, that Heavenly Host, sent forth but to wait upon some very important services, *the protection of a Patriarch,*

*r Dio. Cass.  
Rom. Hist.  
l. 43. p. 262.*

*triarch, or a great Prophet, the declaration of the Birth of the Son of God, or perhaps to solemnize (as his first coming in weakness, so) his second coming in Power, against Jerusalem and the other Enemies of his Kingdom;* Can we then approach any such cheap and little thoughts concerning them as to imagine they are sent forth to run a-tilt in the Air to find the vain World talk, and to tell it news? or that God would ever confer the honor of so solemn a Presage upon so mean an occasion as a paltry Battel at Sea or Land? too often intended but a service to the lusts and passions of men which have broken all those cords of love, precepts of charity, whereby they are bound one unto another.

Now then, except men will say (as some incline) that there are in the Air the Spirits of all natural things, of Horses, Men, Dragons, in which (as in the ashes of the flower in the Chymists glass) there remains a formative Power of those shapes in which they once dwelt, (which conceit yet gives no account of the artificial Forms in the Air, of Arms, Castles, Ships, &c.) what more probable account of these ludicrous Forms in the Air can be given then the operation of apostate Spirits, ready <sup>ἵνα</sup> *ἵνα* <sup>ῥησὶν</sup> *ῥησὶν* <sup>ψεῦδος</sup> *ψεῦδος* (in the Phrase of S. John) *to make a lie* as well as to tell one? Sure I am, we find the Appearances

pearances of Armies and the noise of Trumpets in the Air, found among such bad company (so many hateful Omens and Prodigies observed by the Heathen) as is sufficient to blemish their reputation, and to give suspicion that the observation and production of both was owing to the same Father of lies.

\* Ovid having mentioned the noise of Arms and Trumpets heard from the Clouds, relates (as Presages of equal place and repute with him) *the weeping of the Statues, the wandering of the Ghosts, the odd figures and colors of the Sacrifice, Voices in Groves*; and the like doth Virgil in that place so often cited. Besides, All God's Works (those especially which come to seal some Truths, or to declare some purposes of import) ever carry with them some undoubted testimony of their Divine Original. All those divine Dreams, Visions, Impulses, Intellectual Impressions, Revelations, by which holy men of old were taught of God, left (like the Sun-beams) no place for a Dispute about their Cause: there was that *ἰδιότης ἀπρόσβλητος*, *unexpressible peculiarity* in them which satisfied the Persons which received them that they arose not from the energy of fancy or black choler. And if these were the special Works of God to signify any great Purpose of his, the Characters of their Divine Original would be so legible upon them  
that

*Ovid. Met.  
l. 15. sub fin.*



that he that runs might read them. Whereas the most zealous Assertors of the significancy of these and the like Prodigious Effects appear wholly <sup>u</sup> unresolved whether to intitle the Power of God or the Devil to their production: How then can a wise and judicious Christian understand whether he be to receive them with a devout fear or a great suspicion?

<sup>u</sup> Portenta  
quæ apud Gen-  
tiles aut impi-  
os contingunt,  
utro sibi tam  
bonos quam  
malos Angelos  
habere possunt  
Autores; utros  
vero hæc, utros  
illa habeant,  
difficilius esse  
judico quam  
ut ab homine  
definiatur.

Gasp. Schot.

Physic. Curios.

l. 6. c. 3.

Impure Spirits, like Juglers, may oft do very strange tricks to call upon themselves the Observation of the World, or (as S. Austin speaks) *noxia curiositatis retibus implicare*, to flie-blow the minds of men with curious and impertinent inquiries into times to come, or to abuse that faith and fear whereby God alone is to be honored. Or perhaps when they see Causes big with some sad Effects, they may by such Signs fore-shew them, to derive upon themselves the Opinion of Prescience, or of some great affection to Man, whom they awaken, though indeed it be but as *Delilah* did *Samson*, when, *the Philistines*, some great Evils are just upon him; for I observe many of these Airy Forms bearing equal date almost with the Evils emblem'd in them. Or finally, some impure Spirits may possibly in these antick figures serve that impostrous and sportive humor, thought to be in them as well as in some <sup>w</sup> men.

Prov. 26.  
18, 19.

Now

Now then when we have all the high probabilities (beyond which to expect in this Argument, is a sign men understand not the Laws of Discourse) to perswade us that the more artificial of these delusive Images are of the Devil's erecting, what worship and reverence can any sober Christian imagine due to them? No man will give regard to any signs or words which fall from him in houses or persons possess'd, and is he become as soon as he mounts the Air (like the Pope once gotten into his Chair) God's Oracle, and worthy of all faith and observance? Surely no. The more strange it is to find some learned men, while they acknowledg these and the like Prodigious Appearances in the World effected by the Great Father of impostures, receiving them notwithstanding, as the Signs of God's Fatherly Care and Providence over the Affairs of Men. For so <sup>x</sup> *Lavater*, speaking of Spectres, the Appearance of Armies in the Air, and odd noises in the Clouds and the like, tells us, *Although it is very likely that the most of these Prodigies are of Diabolical efficiency, yet we may discover in these things the Paternal care and good-will of God towards us, and the defence he makes us against the treacheries of the Devil.* The nakedness of which Opinion will not permit me to look any longer thereupon.

*x* *Esti autem pleraq; à Cadamone fieri verisimile sit, nihilominus tamen videmus his in rebus Dei Opt. Max. erga nos paternam curam benevolentiam, defensionemq; contra insidias Diaboli.* *Lavater. de Spectris, P.2. c.3. & P.1. c.16.*

G

SECT.

## SECT. IV.

*Concerning Apparitions of Spirits.*

*Aristotle his general silence in matters where he could not be well resolved, commended: and imitated in this Theme. Three Conclusions in reference to Apparitions laid down. Men subject to a double extrem as to Religion and Providence. The Resolution of some Philosophers in Lucian as to matters of difficulty noted, and imitated by some men. Some Relations of Apparitions concluded creditable, and why. Spirits noted to have appeared sometimes in strange Forms before some great Desolations, and why. No Signs to be credited given by unclean spirits. The Ethnick Doctrine of two sorts of Demons, a fetch of the Devil. Two marks proposed to distinguish bad Apparitions from good.*

**T**HERE is nothing more dreadful to the sight, nor yet more grateful to the ears of the most, then Apparitions of Ghosts and Spirits: Concerning which therefore I should endeavor to serve the curiosity of the Reader in a more full and distinct Discourse then I now intend, if that demand of *Archimedes* upon another occasion, *Δός μοι σῆμα, δός μοι σῆμα, δός μοι σῆμα*, Give me some sure ground to stand upon, could first be satisfied. But this I am under a despair of finding, while the Philosophy of their Nature is so full of uncertainty, the History of their Appearings so big with Legend, and the account of the consequents of their Signs so steep'd in Affection and Superstition. It is noted by some of his Disciples,

ciples, much to the commendation of their Master *Aristotle*, that he hath said so very little concerning God and Providence: it being a great instance of modesty and sobriety of mind, in Divine matters especially, *μη λογισθαι ἀνὰ φῶτος* (as the *Pythagoreans* direct) *not to speak without sufficient light* in the case; which He could not have amidst the darkness of *Gentilism*. I shall herein imitate him, not intending to write much by dark, and to be very busie in a Theam where I am unprovided of any sure Principles to measure my conceptions by. All that I shall offer on this subject shall be comprized in these three Propositions:

First, *There have been some such Apparitions of Spirits as Books commonly make faith of.* I readily grant that this Argument (like an enchanted House) is full of Fantasmis and delusive Images; and that many stories of this nature there are, which like Spectres are filled out in shew, with reality and substance, but when we come to handle and examine them by making search into their truth and evidence, we find them vanishing into the air of common report, or the single testimony of some superstitious and melancholy Imaginant. And therefore, I know many men are not at all impressive to any such Relations, but look upon them all but as (Apparitions indeed) things which never advanced

vanced nearer to Realities than the Images of a Dream.

Look as in Religion, some men (to present God with a flattering faith) take great pleasure to invent new mysteries therein, to fancy a *βαβυλ*, somewhat inexplicable in every article thereof, till they have made it a contradiction to the most natural Maxims and easie sense of our minds, and a scandal to men that can discourse; so others are very busie in filling up every *depth*, and removing every real mystery therein, till they have left no image or footstep of its unsearchable Author thereupon. Thus it comes to pass in the matters of Providence, some men are hugely taken with mysteries therein, delighted to *hear* and relate somewhat *new* and strange; their *Pia Mater* is alway big with some Religious *Legend* or *Prophecy* to obtrude upon the easie World as a divine discovery: Others again would remove all Prodigies, Apparitions, and what-ever goes off from the figures and measures of common and ordinary; and know not to admit a Perswasion of any thing, of whose Causes, Ends or Examples they are not aware.

*In Alexand.*

*Lucian* commends this temper in *Epicurus*, *Democritus*, *Metrodorus*, That if any thing rare and wonderful fell before their consideration, they had put on *ἀδαμψυρνὴν γνώμην*, a Resolution as inflexible as Adamant



mant to endeavor a Solution thereof, and its reduction to the proper ends and causes: which if they were able to do, well and good; but if not, to arrest all further search and wonder with this sentence, *Πῶς ἔστι ἐξ ὧν ἀδυνατῶν*, it is a lie, and impossible to be at all. (An easie art to maintain the repute of understanding men!) And we shall not seldom find men (especially such as are arrived at no great experience of themselves or things) advancing the length of their own Understanding and Experience (as our *English* King did his arm) the common standard and measure of the truth or falshood of things; an instance of which temper appears in their slow and heavy motion to a faith of such things (Apparitions among the rest) whose natures, causes, ends or patterns fall not within their compass. But certainly, as to be of a waxen faith, impressive to any Narrations of this nature, is an instance of softness and superstition; so an obstinate and pertinacious incredulity retains a little to Atheism, because removing one of the greatest and most pregnant Arguments of a Deity, and giving cause of suspicion that the Person hath a temper scarce curable by Religion, which (as we may observe) is so managed, as to suppose men candid and ingenuous, such as will sit down with high probabilities, where the condition of the

Q

things

things to believed admits not evidence and demonstration, The Stories of all Times are full of Relations of such things as these, and therefore Unbelief in this particular is guilty of the rudeness of giving the lie to the World: and besides, some of these Relations are delivered with such circumstances of time, place, words spoken, Events succeeding, Secrets discovered, strange Passions in Men and Beasts, upon the presence of such Apparitions, as secure them (as much as can be expected) from all suspicion of deceit of sight or imagination in the Attestors.

y Vid. Lavater.  
de Spectris,  
P. 1. c. 12, 13.

z Cardan. de  
rer. variet.  
l. 14. c. 69. &  
l. 15. c. 78.  
a Gros. Magic.  
de Spectr.  
Propos. 2.

They which have itching ears for such stories, may have them sufficiently scratched by z Cardanus, z Grosius, and other Undertakers in this curious Argument.

Secondly, The Apparitions of evil Angels in what places, forms, companies, and their Premonitions by what voices and signs soever, ought not to be attended unto as the Prognosticks of any Events whatsoever.

b Dr. Jackson,  
Serm. on Luk.  
13. 5. p. 18.  
Dr. H. More,  
Myst. Godl.  
l. 2. c. 2.  
Gasp. Schot.  
Phys. curios.  
l. 2. de mirabl.  
Spectr.  
c 1 Sam. 28.  
19.

Many Relations there are current in b Writers and common converse of such Apparitions in very terrible Forms, and that before some great Plagues and Wars: and I shall not once attempt to build my Cause upon the ruins of the Credit of them all. (We find in Scripture the fall of c Saul and Jonathan, though ambiguously, foretold by the Apparition of an evil Angel.) Such Appa-

• ritions

ritions have hapned (though generally in times and places of greatest Ignorance and Superstition) and that perhaps, as was said, that these lying Spirits may maintain an Opinion of their foresight of things (though the matters signified by them be such as might easily be discovered in their Natural or Moral Causes) or to get such a stock of credit whereby they may set up Cheaters with the less suspicion for the future; or in a petty triumph over men, whose sins, together with their temptations, have betrayed them to such approaching deaths and miseries (the Reason alledged by some why they appear so much among Tombs and Charnel-houses,) or to extort from men some fantastick Rites and Februations to chase away *Mormo's* and Spectres, and to make them infinitely superstitious and distrustful of God and Providence. Or perhaps God will have these *Apollyons* seen, as it were, upon the Stage, before Execution, that men may know and consider into whose hands, in all likelihood, their iniquities have betrayed them.

But admit Satan to be in these Apparitions (as in other matters) *ἐχθρὸν δυνάστην* (as S. Basil stiles him) an Enemy not easily scented out, and his depths past our fathoming, sure I am we have no warrant at all to give any evil Spirit the honor of the least

d Hof. 2. 17.

e Mark 1. 24.

f 1 Cor. 10.

11.

g Deut. 16.

21, 22.

h Gen. 28. 18.

31. 52, 54.

21. 33.

i Pla. 78. 49.

credit and regard, by an observance of any word, action, or sign of his. <sup>d</sup> God would disown one of his Royal Titles, when once blacked and profaned by the Devil's usurpation. Our <sup>e</sup> Savior refuseth a just and true testimony to his Divinity, when given in by the Father of lies. God's Servants refuse his good Creatures, when once set <sup>f</sup> upon the Devil's Table. No <sup>g</sup> Groves must be placed near God's Altar, nor Pillars erected as <sup>h</sup> formerly, when once profaned by diabolical imitation. We are allowed *no fellowship with Devils*, by whom truth is never told but to serve some delusion and imposture. And therefore though we <sup>i</sup> read that God sometimes made use of *evil Angels* as the Executioners of his Judgments, yet never that he commissioned any of them to be Denouncers of them.

To receive therefore the evident or but suspected Apparitions, Voices, Drummings, Noises of evil Spirits in the Heavens or Earth, as Presages of some approaching Evils (as if like some strange Creatures in the Sea they used to play in sight against a storm) is to *consult shame* to our selves and to our Religion: *To our selves* ] because rendring our selves thereby to the suspicion of having an huge credulity and curiosity (pregnant arguments of a vain and unfurnish'd mind) that will advise with the Devil

to know what God will do hereafter. *To our Religion*] deriving upon it an appearance of falshood in the many assurances it tenders us of the treacheries and impostures of those forsaken Spirits. Such Apparitions report nothing to us with faithfulness, but (what they usually tempt men least to believe) the Being of God; and so (as the Vipers flesh is said to cure its own biting) enable us to quote the Devil against Satan, and to cast him out by himself. The *Chaldee Oracle* long ago advised men against an attendance to any verbal or real Sign given them by *κυνες* *Πρὶ δαιμό-*  
*ἄνθρωποι* *terrestrial Dogs* (as they called their *νων ἐνύλων δ*  
more material and coarser sort of *Demons*, *λόγῳ* *· καὶ*  
conceived the Worriers of Souls,) because *κύνας μὲν τὰς*  
*Οὐτ' ἀληθεὶς σήμα βερωτὰς δεικνύουσιν*, *never* *πρωτέρους ἢ*  
*showing any true Sign to Man*; *πρόρω τ' εἰσ* *ψυχῶν.*  
*πελαγμένοι ζῶντες*, & *τ' νοσεῖς θεωρίας ἀπολιμ-* *k Psel. Schol,*  
*πομόμφοι* (as *Pfellus* paraphraseth the O- *in locum,*  
racle) being placed at huge distances from the  
*Divine Life*, and lapsed from all intellectual  
*Contemplation*: and so neither willing nor  
able to give any creditable notices of a fu-  
ture time. In which, both Text and Para-  
phrase, there may be much of truth, though  
I think the common Ethnick Doctrine of  
some more cruel and cheating, and others  
more kind and trusty *Demons*, was a fetch of  
the Devil's much like that of our common  
Cheats, which caveat with much seriousness



against Thieves and Cutpurses, that the light of this pretended honesty may so dazzle mens eyes, that themselves may practise their art the less suspected and discovered.

It is our wisdom not to invite the Devil so far to be our Oracle, as to vouchsafe the least credit to any of his prophetick speeches, postures, actions; but to resolve to take the Goodness and Providence of God as security sufficient for the peace and composure of our minds; and not to put our selves out of his keeping (and so make way for the accomplishment of any of them) by any distrustful fears, arising from an observance of any Signs whatsoever given forth by so sworn an Enemy to God, Truth, and the Peace of Man.

Thirdly, *The Appearances of good Angels are now rarely given, hardly discovered, never to be expected.* I say, *Rarely given*] Oracles, Revelations, Miracles, Visions, Apparitions, were a kind of extraordinary *Manna* from Heaven, whereby God supplied the necessities of that more desert state of his Church under the old Law: all which, the more plentiful provision, and more silent and gentle temper of this new Oeconomy, hath rendred less suitable and expedient: And therefore are seldom vouchsafed now: I do not say *Never*, lest I speak without book. To omit some very probable Relations of  
this

this nature, that<sup>1</sup> Apparition is usually. See the story more fully related by Dr. Jackson, Ser. on Luke, from the Historian,  
 thought an Herald from Heaven, which amidst a great attendance came and advised JAMES the fourth of Scotland (in whose Councils at that time the concerns of a Nation were wrapt up) to forbear some evil practices, but especially the fighting of his intended Battel with the English, in those words, *Rex, ego ad te missus sum, ut te admoncam, ne qua instituisi progrediaris; quam admonitionem si neglexeris, non erit è re tua, nec eorum qui te comitabuntur.* Which counsel He neglecting, Himself, most of his Nobles and Army, fell in that fatal Battel. *Hardly discovered*] for how easily may the Devil impose upon our Simplicity in the Livery of an Angel of light? Though I think there are two more trusty Characters to distinguish the Apparition of an evil from a good Angel, then the cloven-foot vulgar Opinion affixeth to the Devil: One is, the impertinency and frivolousness of the end and occasion thereof. Apparitions, Miracles and Revelations (by Dreams, Oracles, Impressions) were the three ways whereby God anciently discovered and assured his Truths and Counsels to Mankind. Now as the m Ancients often distinguish true Revelations and Miracles from pretending ones, by calling men to consider whether they were directed *regis & à Juxta Cornetiar, to the spir-*  
*ritual*

m Origen. l. 2, cont. Cels. p. 90, & 91. & l. 3. p. 127. Vid. J. Gerson, de distinct. verar. Vision, à falsis.

ritual and eternal health and safety of Souls, and whether they were ἀνθρώποις ὠφέλιμα, *profitable and really useful to mankind*: all true Miracles and Revelations being (like God) great, good, and holy, in themselves and ends: so we may by the same standard prove the truth of Apparitions: if the ends and occasions they come to serve be mean, cheap, vain, we may arrest them upon suspicion of forgery and imposture: God never sent an Angel from Heaven upon a sleeveless errand. The other character is the monstrous form and shape thereof. The *Sons of God* never debase themselves by such brutish shapes, ludicrous postures, which evil Spirits usually do; designing to get to themselves the homage of some great fear from men, or to abuse their imaginations, or to dishonor the image and figure of Man (whom they so much hate) or to appear rather ridiculous than abominable. *Never to be expected*] because never promised [to counsel us, though they are to protect us.] Converse with Angels is a dignity which our state of infirmity cannot well bear, nor our follies admit: it is reserved to that blessed time when we shall be ἰσάγγελοι, *equal to the Angels*, and so more fit company for them than we are while carrying about us τὰς ἐνυλὺς χιτῶνας (as the Platonist calls our bodies) *these coats of matter and dust*.  
And

# Luk. 20. 36.

And this I hope may suffice to tender concerning these second kind of *Prodigies Signal*.

## CHAP. IV.

*Concerning Prodigies Supernatural.*

**T**Here are some Events, which the History of Times presents us with, of so peculiar a make and character, that they stand alone in Nature, and their Causes stand so much in the dark, that they seem to enter a very fair and plausible Plea for the repute of a Miracle: Such as are the turning of Ponds and Lakes (in appearance) into blood; Swords as of fire seen to hang over Cities (as that over Jerusalem) for several days together; the removal of Mountains or other parts of the Earth for several furlongs from their natural places; the falling of Hail or Snow sealed with some unusual figures; some strange alterations observed in the motions and tempers of the Birds or Beasts, or colors and figures of the Heavenly Bodies; the weeping or sweating of Statues, stains as of blood discovered upon Stones, or the Images of great men; New Stars discovered in the Heavens. With these must be reckoned some sudden intermissions of the light of

o Vid. Gaffarel  
Unheard-of  
Curiosities,  
p. 355.

of the Sun, occasioned not by the veil of an Eclipse cast before it, but some unaccountable passion of the luminous Body it self. Such a deliquium we read of immediately subsequent to the death of *Cæsar*, concluded by the Ethnick Poet, a kind of prodigious shrinking of the Eye of Heaven from the view of so black a wickedness as the Assassination of so excellent a Person; P who upon occasion thereof thus expresseth himself:

p Virgil. Georg. l. 1.

*Ille etiam extincto miseratus Cæsare Romam  
Cum caput obscura nitidum ferrugine tinxit,  
Impiaque eternam timerunt secula noctem.*

*The Sun eclips'd it self when Cæsar dy'd,  
And all its Glories did in Sables hide  
To mourn Rome's loss; while guilt receiv'd  
the Sight  
As Pledg or Picture of Eternal Night.*

A like instance whereunto (in another kind) is the sudden torpor and standing still of great Currents, and the parting of their Waters in so wonderful a maner, that they carry some weaker imitations of those miraculous divisions of Waters in sacred Writ. Such was that which hapned Ann. 1399, when the River of *Ouse* in *Bedfordshire* parted about *Harold* in that County, the Waters from the Fountain standing still, and those toward



toward the Sea giving way, so that it was passable over on foot for three miles together. To all which must be added that dreadful Eruption of Fire from Mount *Vesuvius*, first hapning in the second year of *Titus*, immediately upon the Desolation of *Jerusalem*.

Now though I am far from giving to all these Effects the repute of a Miracle, much less of a Sign; yet because Nature seems not in these, as in other Prodigies, to err by any known Law, and some of them at least are so wonderful, that they appear to stand in the confines of a Miracle, I thought good to discourse them inclosed under another name and notion: And the rather, because if our Adversaries should chance to call a knub an horn, to stile these or some other of the fore-mentioned Prodigies, Supernatural and Miraculous, they may seem (like *Proteus*) to avoid all the knots they cannot unloose, Reasons they cannot answer, by shifting forms; and that Event which they cannot advance a Sign of the time under the name of a Prodigy, they may possibly assay to do under the color of a Miracle.

That therefore which I shall offer concerning Prodigies Supernatural (whether in truth or pretence I shall not much inquire) shall be couch'd in these few ensuing Propositions.

SECT.

## SECT. I.

*Three Propositions concerning Prodigies Supernatural.*

No extraordinary work to be hastily judged a Miracle, for four Reasons. Our Savior why especially frequent in cleansing the Lepers and raising the dead. Lying Oracles and Miracles much used by the Devil to the purposes of imposture. Three Ages of Miracles. Miracles wrought very sparingly as to number and measure. Why Miracles came attended heretofore with instruction. The Sword as of Fire which hung over Jerusalem, an intended Sign of Desolation: the special fitness of that Sign to the end thereof. Some other Prodigies related in Josephus, why not of equal credit with this. What to be thought of the voice in the Temple by him recorded, and of the sudden opening of the Gates thereof. The Temples usually the Scene of Prodigies among the Heathens, proved from their Writers. The policy of the Devil in that, noted.

**O**Ur first Proposition is this: *It is a great example of rashness, easily to intitle any strange Effect, whose cause stands not in a good light, Supernatural and Miraculous: and that upon a fourfold account:*

I. *We understand not the just compass of that sphere of activity assigned to bare Natural Powers, and how far they may (in some circumstances) exceed the lines of common and ordinary Operation. How many Works of Art are there, scarce the wonder of our days, the performance whereof, in the rudeness of former times, would have preferred a man to the repute of Simon Magus, the great Power*

Power of God? Who would not two or three hundred years ago have vouch'd the breaking down of mighty walls by the powers of a little black dust, as great an impossibility, as the *Indians* did the communicating by Letters at so great a distance? We understand not fully how far our Notions of possible and impossible (when we are in view of Agents Natural) are fix'd and faithful. Some things we well understand to be impossible in Nature, or else we were not capable of being perswaded by a *real* Miracle; but other things we onely think to be impossibles in Nature, or else we were not capable of being deluded by an *appearing* one. As for the Miracles wrought by our Savior, lest any shadow of natural Power might seem to assist and so to disparage them, he usually exerted his Divinity in restoring of men born blind to sight, in curing of the woman whom Art had given for desperate, in commanding the waves and storms into silence with a word: but especially frequent was he in raising of the dead and cleansing of the Lepers: the former all the World would acknowledge a Work that lay perfectly out of the ways of Nature; and the latter the *Jews* commonly stiled the *finger of God*, and therefore this Miracle especially (of which they had such a great Opinion) is said to be wrought for *a testimony*

Dent. 13. 1, 2  
2 Thef. 2. 9, 10  
Mat. 24. 24.

Luk. 8. 43.

Mat. 11. 5.

2 King. 5. 7.

Mat. 8. 4.

*mony unto them.* These were Works where of no Magician ever attempted the counterfeit: otherwise his Miracles had left open a wide door for Infidelity to get out at. And no question, if God intended that the fore-mentioned Prodigies should be received with the Opinion of Miracles, there should not appear the least shadow of natural Power in them to obscure the lustre of his Divine Power immediately exerted in the production of them.

2. *We understand not fully how far the Dominion of the Prince of the Powers of the Air extends, and how far he is able to ape a Miracle by those wonderful impressions he can make upon natural bodies.* We read of a

\* Rev. 13. 13. *Power, doing great Wonders, and causing Fire to come down from Heaven, as it were in imitation of Elias: & so much to the life had the Devil's false Prophets imitated the true ones in their great Works, that they are said*

y Mat. 24. 24. *to arise and shew great Signs and Wonders, where the very same Greek words are*

7 Acts 6. 8. *used which express the real Miracles of St. Stephen.* The two ways whereby God hath advanced his Kingdom, are *Oracles* and *Miracles*: and we shall find *Lucifer* his ambition of being like the Most High, express in his (though lying) *Oracles* and *Miracles*. For we read of the Deliverers of false Prophecies

phacies and the Doers of lying Wonders  
 a foretold as immediately subsequent to our <sup>a</sup> Mat. 24. 24.  
 Savior's Ascension. And some expound  
 those two horns <sup>b</sup> ὄψια <sup>c</sup> Ἀπρίω like to the <sup>b</sup> Rev. 13. 11.  
*Lamb*, which the Dragon is said to have, of  
 those two Powers of giving forth (though  
 false) Prophecies and Miracles, whereby the  
 Devil in his Emissaries did <sup>c</sup> heretofore ape <sup>c</sup> *Demonum*  
 and resemble the Lamb and his followers. <sup>c</sup> *ratio delite-*  
 And so fair a stamp had he set upon them <sup>c</sup> *scens sub no-*  
 that they long past current in the World, <sup>c</sup> *minibus &*  
 according as it was <sup>d</sup> foretold. Nay *Hiero-* <sup>c</sup> *imaginibus*  
*cles* (who yet had the Touchstone of Phi- <sup>c</sup> *mortuorum,*  
 losophy to discover them by) was so far in- <sup>c</sup> *quibusdam*  
 charmed by those lying Wonders wrought <sup>c</sup> *signis & mi-*  
 by that Arch-Magician *Apollonius*, that (as <sup>c</sup> *raculis & O-*  
 appears from what *Eusebius* wrote against <sup>c</sup> *raculis fidem*  
 him) he durst vie them with the mighty Mi- <sup>c</sup> *Divinitatis*  
 racles wrought by our Blessed Savior. To <sup>c</sup> *operatur. Ter-*  
 assert therefore the fore-mentioned or the <sup>c</sup> *tul. Apol. c. 22.*  
 like extraordinary Works, transcendent to <sup>c</sup> *d Rev. 13. 14.*  
 the Powers of the infernal Kingdom, or that  
 evil Spirits can serve no ends of imposture  
 in them at some times, is an Assertion which  
 seems to have more of heat than light  
 therein.

3. We ever find the wise God setting great  
 store by his Miracles, reserving them always  
 to the service of some great occasions: so  
 great, that the Person and service of John  
 the Baptist seemed not great enough to re-  
 ceive



ceive the honor of a Miracle. We read but of three Ages of Miracles: 1. When the Law was to be given, and the Jewish Oeconomy to be settled, and that among a People too dull and heavy to be wrought upon by subtil Arguments. 2. When the Law was to be restored to its just reverence amongst that Apostate People, the ten Tribes, who were fallen into so Lethargick a sleep, that there was no awaking of them into a sense of God and Duty, but by the loud voice of some mighty Signs and Wonders. 3. When that Oeconomy which was founded in Signs and Wonders was now to expire and to give place to the Kingdom of the *Messiah*. And we may observe, that when God did work a Miracle, yet he did it very sparingly, and usually as much in the use of natural Agents as their capacities would allow. When he would divide the Sea, he did it by causing an East-wind to blow all night upon the Waters: and when he would destroy the Egyptians, he first disordered their Chariots and broke their Wheels, *ut quasi rerum naturalium aut artificiosarum vitio non divina potentia miraculo corruisse viderentur*; as *g Pineda* notes upon that occasion: when our Savior was to ascend Miraculously to Heaven, he went as far as he could on foot thither, even to the top of Mount *Oliver*: and when *Elijah* was to fast forty days, that there

e Exod. 14. 21.

f Vers. 25.

g Pined. de  
reb. Salomon.  
l. 4. c. 13. p.  
240.

there might be no wast of Miraculous Power, God would have him eat a double meal before it. It would therefore speak us greatly ignorant of the extraordinary sacredness of a Miracle, to give the honor thereof to every strange Accident of which our Philosophy can give no very smooth and consistent an account, and to imagine Heaven is grown so lavish of them now, as to throw them out upon every cheap and unknown occasion. The Laws of Nature proceed upon a more excellent counsel then that we may presume them rescinded upon any little or unaccountable ends.

4. *God's Miracles came forth heretofore attended generally with instruction*: Being usually wrought by great Prophets, who could teach the People, and point to their intended significations. Miracles are commonly God's Seal to some great Truth, and therefore some writing they must be affix'd to; for as the writing without the seal wants authority, so the seal without the writing significancy. God's Miraculous Works never come forth (like a Jugler's tricks) soly to make men stare and wonder; nor are they level'd onely to the advancement of his own Power and Divinity (sufficiently reported, as the Apostle tells us, *by the things which are made*) but generally to some humane benefit, the curing of some desperate disease,

R

the

the supplying men in some urgent strait, the affrighting of them from some destructive practice, or the confirmation of them in some important truth (the ultimate end of them all.) And therefore it is necessary that we understand what errand this or that supposed Miracle comes forth upon, and upon what account we are concerned therein. Where Men understand not the meaning of the loud voice of a Miracle, it speaks but *into the Air*. Now what Prophet have we able to lead us to the true meaning of any such great Wonder? If it be God's Embassador, where is the *Interpreter* that can expound its language, and resolve us whether it confirm a Truth, or declare a Judgment, or refute an Error, or foretel a Funeral? Without some instruction attending it, every strange Event in the World will (to the most) be like the Wind, they may *hear the sound thereof*, but not know *whence it comes, nor whither it goes*, what cause it proceeds from, nor what end it is directed to.

Upon a Consideration of the Premises, I understand not how any hasty Conclusions now concerning the Miraculousness of any strange Event can reconcile themselves to counsel and sobriety.

Propos. 2.

Secondly, *That flaming Sword* (as both figure and form may intitle it) *which hung over*

over Jerusalem for the space of a year together before the Roman Eagles prey'd upon it; was probably intended a Sign of an ensuing vengeance. For our Savior prophesied of some fearful Sight, and great Signs from Heaven, as the fore-runners of the Desolation of that City; and perhaps upon a due Judgment of the several circumstances of this Heavenly *Phænomenon*, it will appear big enough to fill out that Expression. What more fearful Sight then a Sword hanging just over our heads, and a flaming Sword too in the resemblance thereof? God made choice of a <sup>b</sup> flaming Sword as one of the first *real* <sup>b</sup> Gen. 3. 24. expressions of his displeasure to strike a fear of his Justice into fall'n Man. And a *great Sign* it was; for as that Star which was the Conductor of the Wise-men to the place of our Savior's Birth, so this wonderful Appearance declar'd by its peculiar Accidents, that it was of no common make, nor came forth upon a common errand. It appears by the story to have descended so low in the Air, that it was evidently vertical to the City, which if it had been a natural Comet it could not have done: and it lasted so long, and maintained so fix'd a Position, that it cannot well be numbred among those *Idola Cometarum*, in the Elementary Region, mentioned before, whose subtil and dissipable matter serves them not to any such

ἡ τὴν πρὸς τὸ πᾶν  
 λιν ἄστρον ἔστι  
 ῥομφαία πα-  
 ραπλήστον, καὶ  
 παραλείνας  
 ἐπ' ἐνιαυτὸν  
 κομήτης. Ἰω-  
 σηφ. Ἰεζαϊκ.  
 Ἀλως. 5. κ.  
 λα.

i long continuance, at least not to so settled a posture of appearance. Moreover, our Savior's Prophecy runs in the plural number, [*There shall be fearful SIGHTS and great SIGNS from Heaven,*] which therefore cannot well be salved by that single Sight and Sign from thence of Chariots and armed Companies issuing out of the Clouds, of which at large before. But both together proclaim it very fully and wisely accomplished: for the first sight of a fiery Sword was but an *indicative Sign*, an Hieroglyphick and obscurer Image of a War; but the latter a *representative Sign* thereof, being a lively setting forth of one Battel and Army by another.

Now most fit it was that a Nation long deaf to the Voice of the many great Signs from Heaven to proclaim an approaching Salvation, should receive some from thence of an approaching Desolation. Amongst which none seems more proper then a flaming Sword, being an expressive emblem of War and Justice, and a kind of imitation and remembrance of that flaming Sword, which drove the first Parents of that disobedient People (upon their rejection of the *Tree of Life*, a <sup>k</sup> type of *the Lord of Life and Glory*) from the Paradise of God.

— They which shall endeavor to sink the price and value of this and the other Prodigious



digious Appearance in the Air, beneath the esteem I receive them with, by laying beside them some other parallel Examples of them occurring in the Writers concerning Meteors, shall find me no difficult Auditor of them, if they can first fix the accomplishment of our Savior's Prophecy in some instances which may be more plausibly pretended *fearful Sight*s and *great Signs* from Heaven; which I shall take confidence to say, I am sure they are unable to do, or to produce the Examples of any airy impressions able to equal or to come near all the great circumstances of these two.

Nor doth the receiving of these two Signs with such serious thoughts, impose any necessity of entertaining with like Persuasion the many other Prodigies related upon the same occasion by *Josephus*: Particularly, the story there of an *Heifer*, which being brought by the Priest to the Altar, brought forth a Lamb, is a dead fly sufficient almost to some nicer noses to make the whole Relation of his other Prodigies to smell strongly of an imposture: this was rather a ludicrous than a *fearful Sight*: and besides, Can any man think God would ever work so sportive, so cheap, so insignificant a Miracle? It is probable therefore that this Prodigy might be originally coined in some Ethnick mint: for it is sufficiently known

*Karà tñv  
optwv bñs, ð  
à xñvna vav  
f' peds tñv  
duciav ètexen  
àpva èv tñd  
iepō mōv.  
Joseph. ubi  
sup.*

how much it is figured like many other Legends related in the *Gentile* stories, where the mention of Prodigies occurs. *Herodotus* relates that a little before the defeat of *Xerxes*, a Mare brought forth an Hare,

m Xοῖρ ὅ-  
λῃ φανῆναι, πάλιν  
τὸ πρῶτον, ὁ-  
μοίως ἐξήνθη  
D. Cal. Hist.  
Rom. l. 43.  
p. 242.

*Dio Cassius* among other Prodigies, That a Sow brought forth a birth every way like that of an Elephant but lovely in the feet. And whereas *Josephus* there also relates the story of the Priests their going into the Temple about *Pentecost* to attend the holy offices of the Evening, and hearing that voice therein, *μήτε βαινὼντες ἀντιπρὸς αὐτὸν*, Let us go hence, the whole matter seems but a fable originally invented by some superstitious Heathen (a little disguised by *Josephus*) whose usual Doctrine was, that the Gods, when their Temples and Altars were defiled or taken, used to take pet, and *adynis* ariseque *relictis* to betake themselves to some more hallowed and magnificent shrines.

n *Expanse*  
*subito fores*  
*delubri, &*  
*audita major*  
*humana vox,*  
*excedere Deos,*  
*simul ingens*  
*motus exce-*  
*dentium.* Ta-  
cit. Hist. l. 5.  
o *Vid. Filetac.*  
*Idolat. Magic.*  
*sect. 5.*  
p *Æneid. 2.*

Sure I am, *Tacitus* seems to believe and understand this Relation in some such sense as this: and whereas he calls this Voice which was heard *Major humana*, there is a perfect reference to a common Ethnick notion, That all Appearances of the Gods were managed in figures, voices, and other circumstances transcendent to an humane measure: to which Notion *Virgil* had a respect in that Verse,

*Visa*

*Visa mihi ante oculos & nota major imago.*

And whereas both *Tacitus* and *Iosephus* relate the sudden opening of the doors of the Temple, a strange voice in the Temple, and a light as of fire seen in the Temple before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; they appear to me very much to Ethnicize in all these stories. For before the *Lacedaemonians* were overthrown at the Battle of *Leuctra*, it is

storiéd that the Arms in the Temple were heard to make a noise of their own accord; and about the same time at *Thebes*, the Gates of the Temple are reported to have opened of themselves. And *Dio Cassius*, among other Prodigies, takes special notice of an Ape seen to enter the Temple of *Ceres*, and of the Bird of night her flying first to the Temple of *Concord*, and then to many other consecrate places; and (to omit other instances) he records, that the death of *Claudius* was prefiged by the spontaneous opening of the Temple of *Jupiter Conqueror*. And *Plutarch* tells us how the *Adranita* tamely opened their Gates to *Timoleon* and his Armies, declaring with horror and amazement that the sacred Doors of the Temple flew open of their own accord in the midst of the fight, which some of their party had with some of his; and that the face of their Idol

q Subito nubium igne visum collucere Templum.

Tac. ib.

r Gassar. Unhears-of Curios. p. 76.

s Rom. Hist. l. 50. p. 483. t. l. 45. p. 316. & l. 42. p. 221.

u Lib. 60. p. 791.

w Metà peí-  
xns xj θάυ-  
μας & ἀπα-  
χέλλοντες ὡς  
ἐνισαμύνης &  
μάχης οἱ μὲν  
ἰερεῖς τὴν νεῶν  
πυλῶνες αὐ-  
τόματοι δια-  
νοίχθειν, &c.  
Plut. in  
Timol.

x Σημείων  
 x τῶν τεράτων  
 πάντων ἡ ἐξουσία  
 πᾶσι δὲ τοῖς  
 οἰκίαις ἀνθρώπων.  
 Polyb. Hist.  
 l. 3.

God was seen to flow with a great sweat. And  
 x Polybius, upon the expectations of an en-  
 counter with *Hannibal*, tells us (a matter not  
 usual with him) that every Temple was full  
 of Signs and Prodigies. The Ethnick  
 Temples were thus usually the Scene of  
 Prodigies, perhaps because the Devil  
 thought the Sacredness of the Place might  
 give Reputation to the Sign, and prefer  
 the Gods to the Opinion of the Foreseers  
 and Effecters of all the Evils which suc-  
 ceeded.

Now the cutting off these dead and rotten  
 branches from the main Stock of *Josephus*  
 his story, will prove no prejudice at all to  
 those two sound ones fore-mentioned: for  
 these latter were neither very fearful Signs  
 nor great Signs, nor yet from Heaven, nor  
 had they that publick notice and long con-  
 tinuance which these two had, which are  
 therefore the less exposed to suspicion of  
 imposture. But I think I need not much  
 concern my self to throw out Relations  
 which have had peaceable possession of the  
 common Faith for so many Ages. For ad-  
 mit them Truths, they are Examples extra-  
 ordinary in themselves and in their occasi-  
 ons, and (to use the words of *Josephus*)  
 matters that would seem altogether too great  
 for credit, but that succeeded by πᾶσι δὲ τοῖς  
 οἰκίαις ἀνθρώπων, calamities big enough for the so-  
 lemnity

lemnity of some Signs and Presages : and therefore (these Examples, exempted by their peculiar considerations from all capacity of making common rules, set aside) I assert,

Thirdly, None of the fore-mentioned Prodigies, when ever occurring, are now to be received as the indications of the condition of any future time. To a proof of which Proposition I shall proceed in the use of the same facile and perspicuous method which was observed while discoursing of Prodigies Natural ; endeavoring to build it up,

1. By some general Reasons.

2. By a particular Induction.

*Quid turpius quam id esse obscuram ipsum quod in eum solum adhibetur usum ne sint cetera obscura?*  
Quintil. Instit. Orat. l. 4. c. 5.

SECT.



## SECT. II.

## General Reasons against the Significancy of Prodigies Supernatural.

(1) Reason. We have no solid ground to receive these as the significant Signs of any future Event. *The Vanity of all Opinions in Religion which bottom on Imagination. Men apt to neglect the use of Reason in the choice of Opinions in Religion, and why. The danger of so doing. The pretending Reasons of the contrary Opinions answered.* (2) We are unprovided of any sure Rules of Interpretation in reference to them. *Similitude and Experience attended to by the Interpreters of Dreams and Prodigies. The vanity of both in this business evinc'd. The Egyptians of old why in probability such critical Observers of Prodigies. Asian. The great unreasonableness of asserting unintelligible Signs.* (3) A natural account may be given of some of these supposed Miracles. *Strange changes in the Heavens owing to some cause in Nature. The Opinion of Petavius in reference to that Deliquium of the solar light hapning upon the death of Constantine the seventh, rejected. The judgment of Plutarch of the natural cause of some strange Spots sometimes discovered upon Stones.* (4) Many of them of Diabolical efficiency. *The Reasons of that Assertion. The ends the Devil served upon Prodigies: they noted more serviceable to him of old then his Oracles. The Opinion of Fate among the Heathens encouraged by Prodigies. Appian. Plutarch. Lactantius his judgment in reference to them.* (5) Many of these Prodigies minister to greater ends then Prelages: those touch'd upon.

1. Reas.

**T**HAT Argument which well deserves the leading place among rational Considerations against this Opinion, is this: *We have no sufficient grounds and reasons to persuade our reception of any of these (so called) Super-*

Supernatural Prodigies as the Signs of the Times. Without Reason we cannot, ought not, to receive the Scripture it self, much less a Prodigious Event, as an intimation of the Divine Counsels. There are I know some men which can hang their most weighty Principles, like the Earth, <sup>Job 26. 7.</sup> upon nothing. Reasons and Demonstrations are looked upon by them (where Religion appears concerned) not onely as uselefs, but dangerous, and as cold dull things proper onely for Atheists and Hereticks to measure their conceptions by: Their Discourses and Practices speak them Profelites to that Maxim of the old Heathens; <sup>α οὐκ ἐπὶ θεῶν καὶ δαιμόνων καὶ δεινῶν ἐπιστάτων ἐχόντων τὰ μαθήματα καὶ τὰς ἐπισήμας ἀποδείξουσιν, &c.</sup> About Doctrines concern-  
ing the Gods, or any matters Divine, we must never expect Science and Demonstration, but receive them all, how strange soever, with the Religion of a very passive Soul and submissive Faith. Objects hot and vehement, and that do not much task and employ their weaker faculties, as pretended Oracles, Revelations, strong and inexplicable impressions upon their Spirits, mighty Prodigies, some turgent Imaginations and pretty Fantafms, Traditional Perswasions, they use (as silly Birds in the night to that which glares most) to fly about and admire. But these measures of understanding (like the Bed of Procrustes) bring all men to an equal length, and quickly proportion the mind that hath wisdom

*wisdom* to that which hath none; and therefore can be acceptable to those onely, whose sloth and self-neglect gives them a fear of the curse of *Reuben*, <sup>b</sup> *never to excel*.

b Gen. 49. 3.

If once Right Reason, the Door-keeper of the Soul, be put by its office, our inward house will soon lie open and free for every vile and vagrant Opinion to take up and dwell therein. It is indeed the great Doctrine of those Sons of Mystery, the *Cabbalists* and some *Chymists*, that *Intellectus perficitur patiando*; the mind of Man, like matter, is rendred most capable of being well informed by becoming *pura potentia*, a perfectly *passive power* to what *forms of knowledg* may casually come upon it from abroad, or the activity of imagination; and that Truth offers her self soly to such passionate and humble Suiters as can be content even to forego themselves to gain her. But we *know the men and their communication*: God, I am sure, hath nowhere required us to a Faith which cannot satisfie the Reason of a Man which searcheth into the grounds and evidence thereof. He hath commanded us *to prove before we hold fast*, to sound as well as fail. And therefore till we see some better reason offered to acquit our owning of them as the Signs of God's Counsels, besides the imaginations and dictates of dogmatical men (which

(which will venture to break open God's Cabinet while they want any sure Key to unlock it) it is but a just respect to our selves to maintain our freedom of dissent, and to believe such strange Works level'd to some other White then what they imagine.

As for the seeming Reasons which this Opinion leans unto, they will appear (like the *Staff of Egypt*) either to break under, or, by an easie retortion, to pierce and wound it self. For whereas it is urged, that *Except we admit this end of these Semi-miracles, the most quick-scented will be at a fault, wholly at a loss what end of them to assign and pitch upon*: I answer, Is it so great an inconvenience to admit of some Passages in the Book of the Creature, of which we are not Scholars good enough to make a right and proper construction? Are there not some Works of Providence which God hath made deep and mystical, on set purpose, that Man might be humbled by them into a sense of his own ignorance and shortness? See *Isai. 48.7. Eccles. 7.14.* And is it a strange thing to hear of some Works in the compass of Nature out of our reach, such as we must behold (as Children do the Moon) onely with an ignorant Wonderment? Yea, but the World will be alway surprized by Judgments, if we admit not such Prodigies the Signs of them: And hath not God told, even

d Hai. 47. 11,  
12, 13.

e Ecclef. 9. 12.

even those whose Profession it is to look after and expound the pretended Signs of Times, the Monthly & Prognosticators, that Desolation shall come upon them suddenly, and they shall not know? And is not Man expressly said <sup>e</sup> not to know his time, but to be snared in an evil time falling suddenly upon him? Yea, but many strange Judgments have come after such strange Events: What is this but to put the same fallacy upon Men which we sometimes do upon Children, when we tell them, Many people have been known to die after cutting of their fingers? Let it appear that Judgments come Constantly, Immediately, Designedly; after them, and the Cause is yielded. In sum; The great confidence of the Opinion we contend with, seems to lie (for ought I can perceive) but in a series of many Assertors, which, like persons in the dark, shut their eyes, and take care only to hold fast by those which went before them; shall we then entertain an Opinion that hath so little to say for it self? That man that can believe without Reason, is in next capacity to believe against it.

Secondly, We are utterly unprovided of any trusty Rules to direct the Interpretation of these pretended Signs of Heaven. They are a Nose of Wax which may be wry'd to what figure, expounded to what sense. Fancy shall impose upon them. The Ancient Over-

rocriticks



scriticks used to plow with a double Heifer  
to unriddle the mystick meaning of Dreams;  
*Similitude* and *Experience*. They consider-  
ed either what the Images of the Dream  
proposed did most fitly represent, or how in  
former Experience they had succeeded: and  
I never heard that the Interpreters of Pro-  
digies took aim to hit the right sense and in-  
tention of them by any other level than  
that of these two. 1. *Similitude*: That  
they tell us shall succeed of which the Pro-  
digy may be conceived the most natural  
type and representative. As, three Suns in  
the Firmament shall be received as a Pre-  
sage of three Rivals for the Throne in a State.  
A breach in some noted River shall be an in-  
dication of some civil breaches in the Nation.  
A seeming Combate among Crows, a figure  
of one amongst Men. Thus the common  
people, upon occasion of that strange *sweat-*  
*ing Sickness* hapning at the beginning of the  
Reign of *Henry the seventh*, used to say,  
That it was a Sign that his Reign should be  
with much labor, because it began with a Sick-  
ness of Sweat. Another (learnedly) tells us,  
That a Monster made up of Man and Dog in  
the body thereof, did foreshew that the City,  
in which it was born, should be vexed *Can-*  
*nis morsibus & clandestinis prodicionibus*.  
But because the Prodigies sometimes (like  
the head of Time behind) yield no ansa,

f Bac. Hist.  
H. 7. p. 36.  
g Monstrum  
bicorpor ex  
homine &  
cane integra-  
tum, Albania  
in Epiro na-  
tum. An. 1233  
civitatem il-  
lam, caninis  
morsibus &  
clandestinis  
prodicionibus  
divexandam  
ostendit. Schor.  
Phys. Cut.  
l. 5. c. 29.

nothing

nothing for Fancy to take hold of, they be-  
take them to *Experience*, concluding what  
will now from an Observation of what hath  
heretofore followed upon such Anomalies in  
Nature : *h* Herodotus tells us, that there were  
more Prodigies found out and observed by the  
Egyptians (perhaps because of a Traditional  
Reverence of Signs and Wonders continued  
among them from the very Times of *Moses*  
wherein so many hapned) then by any other  
Nation whatsoever. And that their usage  
was, when any Prodigy fell, to write it down,  
and to observe the Event succeeding ; and if  
ever any like Prodigy hapned, they easily con-  
cluded it would be issued in a Similar Event.  
The mind of Man is easily invited to believe  
that other Prodigies will fall out like those  
few with which it is so strongly affected and  
prepossessed ; because loth to be dodged and  
abused with endless uncertainties and diffi-  
militudes, especially among things it hath a  
great Opinion of, and would fain reduce to  
some steady Rules.

But how specious soever these Rules may  
seem to the first view, they will vanish into  
smoke and dust, if but touch'd by the hand  
of Reason. For how many Prodigies are  
there, which the strongest Fancy cannot bend  
and mold to any similitude? As there are  
*πολλοὶ καὶ ἕτεροι, ὧς ὅπως ἔκ' ἐχόντες λαβὼς*  
*ὁνειροῦ* (as *Artemidorus* not unhandsonly  
phraseth

h Τίερατ ἡ  
πλίσ Κοι  
[Αἰγυπῆσι-  
σι] ὁρῶν ἢ  
τοῖσι ἄλλοις  
ἀπὸ ἀνδρῶ-  
νων· ἡμο-  
ρῶν δὲ τίε-  
ρατ φιλὰς-  
σαι χαρὶ-  
ρῶν τοῦ ἀπο-  
καύον ἢ ἡν-  
ποτε ἵστατον  
ὁνειροῦ  
τέτρα ἡμῶν,  
καὶ τὸ τοῦ νο-  
μῶν τοῦ ἀπο-  
κρίσεως.

Herod. Euterp.  
c. 82.

i Oneirocritic.  
l. 1. c. 12.



sonal, otherwhile National Evils, and sometimes great Blessings, have been noted to succeed Comets, Monsters, and the like, as the Registers of them (as kept especially by the Heathens) will attest. And this was the reason why such things were anciently received, sometimes with the Opinion of their being *good*, sometimes of their being *unlucky* Omens.

Can any man then (that will lay out his thoughts of God by any rules) imagine that these Signs are his Text, whose Exposition is intrusted with such giddy and uncertain Interpreters as *Similitude* and *Experience* are? or that he would have us understand his meaning when speaking to us by Signs which borrow all their signification from Conceit and Fancy? What eternal jealousies of Heaven must such random-Signs necessarily create? for if a Judgment do ensue, we are uncertain whether it were the very judgment portended yea or no; but we shall have reason to bespeak it in the language of the *Jews* to our Savior, <sup>1</sup> *Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?* Besides, Men not knowing the kind or season of the Evil portended, will, in all likelihood, be as much surprized by it when it comes, as if never warned thereof at all.

[Mat. 11.3.]

Thirdly, *A very consistent account may be given of the Causes of most of these supposed*

*sed Miracles.* The strange Passions sometimes observed in the Heavenly Bodies, seem necessarily to resolve into some natural Principles of mutability seated as well in the Heavenly as Sublunary Bodies, though at such vast distances less subject to our notices. Several Examples of such Celestial Anomalies in the Philosophick Registers present us with, of which it may suffice to our purpose to take notice of two: The one happening about the year 790, when the Sun in a clear and serene Air, and without the incidence of an Eclipse, lost its usual splendor, and for seventeen days became of a black and darkish hue. Which Prodigy, because falling out immediately upon the death of *Constantine the seventh*, procured by his Mother *Irene*, is concluded by *Petavius* a kind of Voice from Heaven to protest the horridness of the fact against some *Grecians* who appeared very ready to applaud it. But I think it very unsafe to weigh the extremity of such an example at so unfaithful a beam as this: we have a more sure word of *Prophecy*, and a more terrible darkness (that at Mount *Sinai*) to proclaim the hainousness of the Sin of Murder, but especially that of Princes, to the World. Besides, what shadow of Reason had *Petavius* to justify the confidence of this Assertion? Certainly, to imagine that *Comets*, *Earth-*

m See *Bac. Descrip. Glob. Intellect. c. 7. Dr. Ward. de Comet. p. 24.*

n *Quod par-ricidium in Irenes laudem traxerunt Graculi quidam; sed quam invisum Deo fuerit septendecim dierum caligo testata est quæ mortem illius consequuta est.* *Petav. Ration. Temp. P. 1. l. 8. c. 6.*



o Jam. 3. 6.

quakes, the *Deliquia* in the Sun, or any other Anomalies in the World, are owing to the private occasions of particular Kingdoms, is, with the Flie upon the Axletree in the Fable, to conceit we raise all this dust, which indeed ariseth from that *ο νεορος & νεοews*, some more violent motion of the *Wheel of Nature*.

p Not. in Job.  
c. 9. v. 7.

The other Example parallel hereunto, is related by P *Lavater*, who reports that in the year 1585, Mar. 12. such a darkness suddenly coverd the Earth, that the Birds went to roost at noon, and the guilty fears of men antedated the Day of Judgment. These instances teach us, that *the Heavens may wax old like a garment, and be changed as a vesture*; q Psa. 102. 26, *that God onely is the same* (without shadow of change) *and his years without end*. As for those other Prodigies, the *Water of Ponds or Fountains turned* as it is pretended *into blood, the interruption of the current of Rivers, some spots as of blood discovered upon Stones or Statues*, and some other of like condition, their Causes are so various, and Relations so romantick, it is very difficult to make any steady judgment of them, without an actual presence to them: nor can their Causes be hit with any certainty by Persons which stand at a great distance, and understand not the condition of the Season, Climate, Water, Earth, and other circumstances,

stances, when, where and how the Events fell out. He that shall blindly task himself to salve all the *Phænomena* which the ignorance of some and the vanity of others may stuff out some Prodigious Relations with, may quickly have work enough to do. In matters of so doubtful faith and original, I shall choose rather to deliver <sup>Plutarch's</sup> Judgment then my own; ἰδιοντα μὲν γὰρ ἀγάλματα φερωμένα ἐ δακρυρροούντα, &c. It is not impossible (saith he) for the Images of the Gods or Men to seem to sweat, or weep, or to have some drops as of blood upon them: For Wood and Stones do oft contract a kind of rust and soil productive of moisture; and of themselves oft give forth several colors, and receive βαφας ἐν τῷ περιέχοντι, tinctures and stains from the ambient Air.

Fourthly, It seems greatly reasonable to intitule the subtil Agency of the Devil to very many of the Prodigies occurring in Ethnick Writers, and marshal'd by some under this head: Such as are, the throwing down or transposing the sacred Images in Temples, sacrificed Beasts found without Hearts or Livers, the raining of Stones, Armor and Statues flowing blood or sweat for several days, some very artificial Impressions in the Air, the Appearance of Ghosts in terrible forms, some extravagantly monstrous Births, and the like; mentioned up and down in Dio Cassius, Livy

and others. These are (supposing them true) Effects quite out of the compass of Natural, and too cheap, little and ludicrous for a Supernatural Power. And besides, they served not the least benefit of humane life; for either they were followed with nothing but the vain talk and jealousies of the People, or else came forth so just as the Evil was almost in view, that they seemed rather to solemnize the occasion, than to foreflew it. Thus *Polybius* notes *ἡ διαφορά δὲ τῶν Ἀλλήλων* when the Armies of the Romans and *Garthaginians* just lay incamp'd one against another, and the issue of the Battel continually expected, then the Temples and Houses were full of Prodigies and strange Sights.

Several ends the Devil might serve upon such fearful Sights among the ignorant *Gentiles*: as the Opinion of Fatality of Events, That Evils might be a little foreseen, but were impossible to prevent: and therefore *Plutarch*, upon the mention of some strange Accidents which ushered the fall of *Cæsar* (which the Devil might easily foresee in the contrivance thereof) makes this judgment upon the occasion, *ἡ εὐχὴ ὅτι ἂν αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ ἀποδοῖκετον, ὡς ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.* The Fate seemed not so much impossible to be foreseen as to be prevented: And so *Appian*, speaking of the Warnings given to *Cæsar*,

Caesar, tells his Reader that they served  
*magis ut videret quam ut vitaret interitum,*  
 rather that he might foresee his determined  
 ruine than avoid it. Besides, the Devils ha-  
 ving a very subtil foresight of some ap-  
 proaching good or evil, would interpose and  
 declare it by Oracles, Dreams, Prodigies, that  
 (as *Lactantius* well conjectures) they might  
 be thought the Effectors of what they were  
 the Foreshewers; and their favor be courted,  
 or displeasure attoned in new Temples, Sa-  
 crifices, and such Religious Addresses.

x Quoties a-  
 licui populo  
 vel Urbi se-  
 cundum Dei  
 statum boni  
 quid impen-  
 det, illi se id  
 facturos vel  
 Prodigis vel  
 Somniis vel  
 Oraculis polli-  
 entur; si sibi  
 templa, &c.  
 Lactant. de  
 Orig. Error.  
 l. 2. c. 17.  
 y Hist. Rom.  
 l. 42. p. 222.

Moreover, by these he extorted from  
 men the homage of some slavish fears, and  
 when he could not rob them of their happi-  
 ness, deprived them of the comfortable sense  
 thereof: y As appears from *Dio Cassius*, who  
 upon the mention of several Prodigies, tells  
 us, ταῦτα δὲ ἔως τοῦ ἑ Δαμνίου γεγονότων  
 ἐταράχην αὐτὸς. these Prodigious Signs fore-  
 shewn by the Deity did much trouble the Ro-  
 mans: and in the midst of a great serenity  
 of affairs, a he notes οἱ ἐν τῇ Ρώμῃ ἐταράχθη  
 τὸν Ὀπίων, they of the City of Rome were  
 frightened by strange Signs: And elsewhere,  
 upon the mention of another Prodigy, re-  
 ports, ὁ φόβος αὐτῶν ἐκ τούτων [τεταράχθη] ὃν  
 καὶ τοὺς Ῥωμαίους ἐλάβεν. no small fear seized  
 the Romans upon occasion of this Wonder.  
 And when once Fear had deprived Men of  
 their Peace and their Reason both at once,

a l. 43. p. 242.  
 b l. 48. p. 438.

c Vid. Zosim.  
Comit. Hist.  
l.2. in princip.

d Dio Cass.  
l.39.p.111.

they sometimes went to his *c Augurs*  
and *Diviners* to understand the meaning  
of these Signs (which had more windings  
and turnings then the old Serpent,) other-  
whiles to his *d Altars* to expiate the Prodi-  
gy, and to bribe their displeased Deity into  
reconciliation. But the greatest service these  
Prodigies did him, was the maintaining of  
some Opinion of his Prescience in the minds  
of men, without which he well knew the  
fires on his Altars would quickly go out.  
For having appointed all the singularities in  
the *Exta*, in the face of Heaven, in the  
Births of Creatures, in the flying of Birds,  
the weeping of Statues, &c. as a kind of  
Signs from the Gods of some strange Ef-  
fects; when ever he saw their Causes to  
swell out with them, and just ready to be  
delivered of them, he easily could and often  
did occasion such Signs (these little changes  
in the Creation falling within his compass)  
that on which side soever the Die of Affairs  
fell, were the success of a Battel, or a Coun-  
cel on this side or that, he might still secure  
the repute of his Prescience, by holding his  
easie Votaries in hand, that the preceding  
Prodigies were the notices of what fell out.  
Upon an easie foresight of an approaching  
Battel, he could readily give forth a Pro-  
phetick Emblem thereof in some Martial  
Images in the Airy Region, his proper Prin-  
cipality,



cipality, or in the bloody tinctures of a  
 Fountain: and that side which was worsted  
 should be always concluded warned by the  
 precedent Sign. Thus *Dio Cassius*, speak- *e Dio Cass.*  
 ing of the many Prodigies hapning before *l. 43. p. 262.*  
 the Battell between *Caesar* and *Pompey*, tells  
 us, *Men could not before the issue of things*  
*conclude by those Signs to whom Destruction*  
*was determined;* but he (relating those Signs  
 after *Pompey's* overthrow) tells us, that be-  
 ing forsaken of Understanding he resolved  
 to engage *Caesar*, *καὶ τοὶ ἑ Δαμνῶντι τῷ*  
*ἡτῶνι κρατύνοντι ἀπομνηστέον,* although the  
*Deity* did so clearly foreshew his overthrow.  
 A speech that intimates the Heathens  
 thought the Gods to expresse that in their  
 Signs which did succeed them. And there-  
 fore the Devil served his purposes of impo-  
 sture much better upon these dumb then his  
 speaking Oracles; wherein he exposed his  
 reputation greatly by returning doubtful or  
 false Solutions to Questions proposed to  
 him concerning the future. And for some  
 such reason perhaps was the reputation of  
 Dreams so hugely raised above other ways  
 of Divinations among the Heathen; it be-  
 ing as easie for his Prophets to make the  
 Images of a Dream, as a Prodigy, to look  
 very fairly upon the Event which fell out:  
 for so we find in *Artemidorus* one and the  
 same Dream thought fulfilled by eight or *Oneirocritic.*  
 nine *l. ult.*

nine very different and disagreeing Events.

Fifthly, *These Heterosclites, Events which fall off from the Rule of common and usual Nature, minister to bigger ends then Presages.* For they teach us to pay the tribute of admiration to Him, who (though by the Ministry of Second Causes) doth such Wonders. Deliberate wondring (when the Soul is not suddenly surprized) being raised up to an height, is, as one saith, part of Adoration, and cannot be given to any Creature without some sacriledge. Such wondring consists of reverence and ignorance, which becometh even the wisest of men in their searches after God his ways. God hath his *Wonders of Justice*, such wherein he causeth a strange coincidence of blind and contingent Agents *owespryn*, to work together for the detection and punishment of some great Criminals, that men may easily see that the *Wheel brought over them was full of eyes*, conducted by some great *Intelligence*. He hath also his *Wonders of Mercy*, such wherein he walks in ways not cast up to accomplish the well-being and preservation of those which honor him by a great Faith; such, whereof every pious breast is the Office wherein they are registred and recorded. To these He hath been pleased to add his *Wonders in Nature*; the common handling of his other Works being apt to soil them, and

and to keep men from attending to all that Wisdom and unsearchable Greatness displayed in them. Moreover, Some of these things shew us all the Creatures to be in God's hand, and easily commanded (like the Clay in the hand of the Potter) to what figures and uses he shall think fit at any time to appoint them unto. According to that of *Job*: *Who removeth the Mountains, and they know not; which overturneth them in his Anger: which shaketh the Earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble: Which commandeth the Sun and it riseth not, and sealeth up the Stars.* Job 9. 5, 6, 7

The other Ends of these strange Examples, and Arguments *against* or *for* the Observation of them as Ominous, being the same which fill out the foregoing Papers, I shall not here offer the Reader the *redum* of any repetition.

## SECT. III.

*Prodigies Supernatural proved no Divine Signs, by Induction.*

The first fiery Eruption of Vesuvius asserted a Divine Sign by Dr. Jackson. The Reasons of his Opinion thereof fully proposed; and particularly considered. The true application of the parts of our Saviour's Prophecy Mat. 24. proposed; and asserted against Grotius. Dr. Jackson and others. The Sign of the Son of Man, and his Coming substantially the same thing. Reasons alledged against the pretended significancy of Vesuvius. Blazing Stars commonly thought Divine Signs, with the occasion of that conceit: The weakness of the Opinion, and the ground it stands on, discovered. Three heads of inquiry touching the late Blazing-Star, touch'd upon. The Opinion of the significancy thereof discovered to be frivolous in itself, and dishonorable to God.

**I** Am next to endeavor the proof of the Proposition by *Induction*. And here I shall not task my self to a refute of all the Prodiges mentioned under this head, which would engage me to lanch out εις τινα φλυασιαν αβυδον (as Plato upon another occasion) into an abyß of prating, and make my Book become a Prodigy by the monstrous bulk to which it would swell. It may suffice to disparage all the rest, by disabling the significancy of two the most pretending Signs; one in Earth, *That dreadful Eruption of fire from Mount Vesuvius in Campania, first hapning in the second year of Titus*: the other

other in Heaven, *The appearance of New or Blazing-Stars.*

Where the eye of the mind is tinctured with any odd Notion, it is very apt to see every thing of its own color: Thus it fared with the reverend Dr. *Jackson*, whose mind was so possess'd by the Opinion of Prodigies and divine Signs, that he was apt to imagine he discovered one in all the more monstrous Births of Time which fell before his notice; but especially in the flames of *Vesuvius*: For having made mention of the particular characters of horror enumerated by Historians, attending their first Eruption, <sup>g</sup> he adds, *These questionless were the Signs of the Son of Man, that made all the Kindreds of the Earth to mourn.* And as the many false Christs arising, the Earthquakes in divers places, the general hatred of Men, the fearful Signs from Heaven, were given by our Savior *Mat. 24.* as the black tokens fore-shewing the Fates of the *Jewish Church*; so this dreadful Occurrent <sup>h</sup> he contends was given as a Sign fore-running the Fates of the *Roman Empire* (the other deadly Enemy of Christianity) which from that time began to feel its *toes of clay*, and to sink under its own weight, and the many calamities which soon after fell upon it.

<sup>g</sup> Comment on the Creed, l. 1. p. 94.

<sup>h</sup> See his Ser. on Luk. 13.

Now that I may not appear (as *Simeon* and *Levi* dealt by the *Sichemites*) to make that



that Opinion weak and sore, by any partial report thereof, which I would overcome, I shall present it in its full strength, consisting (so far as I can perceive) especially in that exact correspondence observable between the Scripture-Prophecy and the dreadful circumstances of that flaming Mountain; which will appear if we take a little pains to compare God's Text, and his or the Historians Comment both together. And indeed, the ingenuity of the Conjecture merits its representing to the Reader in all the probable appearances which the words of the Writers of those times can derive upon it.

*Ita verò res acta: Viri multi & magni omnem naturam humanam excedentes, quales exprimitur Gigantes, partim in ipso monte, partim in agro circumjacente, ac in Oppidis inter diu noctuq; terram obire, ac aëra permeare viscebantur. Posthac consecuta est maxima siccitas, ac repente ita graves terramotus facti, &c. Dio. Hist. l. 66.*

*Audires ululatus feminarum, infantum quiritatus, clamores virorum, alii parentes, alii liberos, alii conjuges requirerent. Plin. de eodem Vetriv. Epist. l. 6. ep. 10.*

*Nubes ex ardente veluvio oriebatur, cuius similitudinem & formam non alia magni Arbor quam pinus expresserat. [A tree much imitating a Pillar in its shape and figure.] Idem l. 6. Ep. 16.*

*Fam dies alibi, istic nox omnibus noctibus nigrior densiorq; quam tamen facies multa, varisque lumina solvebant: ep. 16. Mox dies verus, Sol etiā effulsit, luridus tamen, qualis esse cum deficit, solet. Nox, non quatinus illunis & nebula, sed quatinus in locis clausis, lumine extincto, &c. Ep. 20.*

JOEL 2. 30.

*I will shew Wonders in the Heavens, and in the Earth;*

*Blood and fire*

*And pillars of smoke.*

*The Sun shall be turned into darkness, and the Moon into blood.*

LUK.

LUK. 21. 25.

And there shall  
be Signs in the  
Sun and in the  
Moon, upon Earth  
distress of nations,

The Sea and the  
Waves roaring;

Mens hearts fail-  
ing them for fear,  
and for looking  
after the things  
which are coming  
on the Earth.

Tantus fuit cinis ut inde pervenerit in Afri-  
cam, Syriam & Ægyptum, introieritque Ro-  
mam, ejusque aerem compleverit, & Solem ob-  
scuraverit: nec mediocris etiam Romæ trepi-  
datio complures ad dies accidit, &c. putare cœ-  
perunt omnia sursum deorsum ferri, Solémque in  
terram cadere, ac terram in cælum ascendere.  
Dion. lib. 66.

Mare in se resorberi & tremore terræ, quasi  
repelli videbatur. Plin. ep. 20.

Erant qui metu mortis, mortem precarentur;  
multi ad Deos manus tollere, plures nusquam Deos  
illos, eternamque illam & novissimam noctem  
mundo interpretabantur: nec desuere qui fictis  
mentibusque terroribus vera pericula auferent.  
Idem ep. 20.

The sitting of the several circumstances  
of this pretending Sign so handsomly about  
the body of the Text, seem to assure that  
they were purposely made and fitted to it  
by the hand of Providence: Especially con-  
sidering that natural fitness in the Sign it-  
self; for what Sign more proper then a  
burning Mountain to give the Gentile  
World to understand that God would shew  
himself as severe a Judg upon the despisers  
of his Gospel, as he had before upon the  
despisers of his Law: against whom at the  
promulgation thereof he proclaimed the  
terrors of the Lord *in blackness and dark-  
ness, in a Mountain that quaked greatly, and  
that burnt with fire to the midst of Heaven.*  
Add to all this; the special Season to which

Exod. 19. 18.  
Deut. 4. 11.

our

Mat. 24. 29.  
30.

our Blessed Savior affixeth the fulfilling this Prediction (of the *darkning the Sun, &c.*) seems to add some further strength and confidence to this literal Exposition: now that was the time *immediately* succeeding to that wherein the black cloud of vengeance (character'd by the signs and condition thereof in the Verses precedent) fell upon the *Jewish* State: As appears from those words of his recorded by S. *Matthew*, chap. 24. v. 29. *Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the Sun be darkned, &c.* i.e. (saith the Doctor) *those days* spoken of before, wherein such unexampled Evils fell upon the *Jewish* Church. And accordingly this unparallel Eruption of fire from *Vesuvius* first hapned in the second year of *Titus*, very suddenly after the Destruction of *Jerusalem* by his Armies.

But there are several things to be pleaded in bar of this specious Exposition: *First*, That Prophecy of the *darkning of the Sun and of the Moon, &c.* was fulfilled before the inflammation of *Vesuvius*, in the final desolation of the *Jewish* Nation: for those words of S. *Matthew*, *Immediately after the tribulation of those days* (which occasioned the Doctor's mistake) do not refer to the days of the last and consummating calamities befalling the *Jews*, but to the *ἡμέραι ἐκείναι* spoken of *vers.* 19, and 22, and 10 the

the many lesser tribulations in them, [Famines, Seditions, Wars, Necessities, Jewish Persecutions, false Prophets,] <sup>1</sup> stiled *ἀρχαὶ ὀδύρων*, the beginnings of travails, (in allusion to a woman whose hour is come, that hath her lesser pangs and griefs to usher the greater sorrows of the birth) being the harbingers of much greater; and as a kind of dimness which concluded in an horrid night, a total extinction of the light of Israel. That which will more fully appear from the infallible Paraphrase of <sup>m</sup> S. Mark upon this <sup>m</sup> Mar. 13. 24. Text, who useth some accuracy of expression on purpose to prevent mis-application of the parts of our Savior's prophetick discourse: *In those days* [of the not yet quite expired Jewish Oeconomy] *after that* [prelusive] *tribulation, shall the Sun be darkned,* that was as it were but clouded before. Besides, <sup>n</sup> Joel (of whose words our Savior's <sup>n</sup> Chap. 2. 31. are but the transcript) prophesied that God would *shew Wonders in the Heavens and in the Earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke,* and that *the Sun should be turned into darkness, and the Moon into blood,* before *the great and terrible Day of the Lord came.* Where, whether we understand some Prodigy in Heaven or Earth, or some pangs of misery which introduc'd the death and ruine of the Body of that Nation, yet all were to fall *Before the great and terrible Day of the*

T

Lord;

Lord; that is (as most expound) that terrible Day of Visitation upon *Jerusalem* (a Scheme of the terrors of that last and great Day,) and in compare with which, all the Evils which fell upon the Gentile World afterward, were of no name and consideration.

The truth of this will yet appear in a fuller light, if we take (as it very well deserves) a little pains to consider the excellent contrivance of our Savior's prophetick discourse as laid before us in S. *Matthew*, who delivers it in greater exactness then the other Evangelists. The Disciples had proposed to their great Oracle a threefold Question: *When shall these things, the Destruction of the City and Temple, be?* (or, as P. S. *Luke* records their Question, *What shall be the Sign when these things shall come to pass?*) and *what shall be the Sign of thy Coming, and of the End of the World?* Now (as *Grotius* well notes) to these distinct Questions of his Disciples our Savior frames a distinct Answer: The not observing whereof at all hath put some *Expositors*, and the mis-application of Answers, *himself*, upon so many false or uncertain glosses and conjectures.

That application of Answers to Questions, which upon due consideration of the circumstances of the Text, seems to give the most easie and natural account of it self,



is this: From *vers.* 4. to *vers.* 29. in answer to their first demand, he gives in a large catalogue of Signs of the approaching Desolation of the City and Temple, *viz.* the arising of false <sup>q</sup> Christs, and false Prophets, calamities (in themselves considered) very great, and the like: And then from *vers.* 29. to *vers.* 36. he satisfies their second Question concerning the Signs of his Coming, saying, *Immediately after the lesser tribulations of those days shall the Sun be darkened,* the very dregs of that cup of vengeance shall be given to that People who tasted but some lesser drops thereof before: *And then shall appear the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven,* coming to the Destruction of this Temple and Nation, the Sign of his being appointed King of a larger Kingdom, and to rule in a more spiritual Oeconomy than the *Mosaical* was: *And then shall all the Tribes of the Earth mourn,* then shall the voice of peace and joy be heard no more among the Families of *Judea*, often express in Scripture and Jewish Writers by ~~the~~ *the Earth.* *And he shall send his Angels with the sound of a Trumpet,* [his inspired Ministers, plainly to warn] *his Elect* [his believing followers, as he did *Laz* and his Family] to escape and secure themselves from the approaching ruines of that City and Nation, as a Sign of his being empower'd to

q Vid. Origeni  
contr. Cels.  
l. 1. p. 44.

save as well as to destroy. And then adds, *When you see these things come to pass, know that I* [my coming in my Mediatory Kingdom, and your Redemption from all further subjection to the Jewish Rites or Persecutions] *is near, even at the door, as indeed it was.* And then applies himself, *vers. 36. to vers. 42. in Answer to their third Question, saying, But of That Day, the Day of Judgment* (<sup>s</sup> styled so, because of the eminency of it) *knoweth no man; look for no such particular Signs of its coming, God having sealed up the particular time thereof amongst those other Mysteries he doth not communicate with the Angels.*

r Luk. 21. 28.  
s See 2 Tim. 1. 18.

t *Distinctis  
discipulorum  
questionibus  
distincte re-  
sponder, prima  
ad comma usq;  
23. secunda  
inde ad com-  
ma 30. postre-  
ma, de fine  
mundi, in seq.  
Grot. ad Mat.  
24. 3.*

u *Vid. Dr.  
Jackson Com.  
Creed, p. 101.  
ed. 1653.*

I know, that *Grotius, Dr. Jackson* and other Expositors give the several parts of our Saviors Prophecy a very different pointing and application; receiving those words of our Savior, [*Immediately after, &c.*] as the Preface to a (very different) Prophecy of some terrible plagues shortly to fall upon the Gentile World, of which the foretold miseries of *Jerusalem* were the pledge and pattern: that which renders them utterly unable to make any other then a Fanciful Exposition of those phrases, *darkning of the Sun, falling of the Stars, Sign of the Son of Man, &c.* and to give any tolerable account when and where the *Elect* were gathered by the Ministry of Angels, and those other

other things fell out, foretold by our Savior to come to pass *immediately*, and *before the passing of that Generation*. For this Prophecy of our Savior is like a skain of silk, which runs all into knots and intricacies, if the right ends be not first hit upon to unfold and lay it open.

Having thus made it appear that the *root* of our Author's Exposition is rottenness (a corrupt gloss upon Scripture) all the pretty blossoms, parallels between the words of Scripture and the circumstances of this flaming Mountain, would, without bestowing more breath upon them, quickly go up in the dust. But yet, as a farther assurance of the vanity thereof, I add,

Secondly, The Sign of the Son of Man, and his Coming, are substantially the same thing (his very Coming being his Sign) as appears by <sup>W</sup> St. Matthew, who makes one expression exegetical of the other: *Then shall appear the Sign of the Son of Man in Heaven; --- and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory.* And therefore when the same Prophecy is elsewhere recorded, Christ's coming in the Clouds of Heaven is mentioned, but that <sup>x</sup> expression (*then shall appear the Sign*) is wholly omitted, because all might understand with ease what end this Coming was a sign and assurance of. Now

<sup>W</sup> Mat. 24. 30.

<sup>x</sup> Luk. 21. 27.  
Mark 13. 26.

then, if this were the Sign of the Son of Man, what Coming of his was there in conjunction with it? Did all the Tribes of the Earth see this Sign, and himself in the Clouds of Heaven through all that smoke and ashes? Besides, is there the least air in the Writers of the first Ages to cherish this Opinion of *Vesuvius*? Do any of them bestow any such serious considerations upon it? Surely if they had understood it to be so great a Sign, they would somewhere have quoted it in conviction of the Echnick World, they are so frequent in their disputes against. And have not the fiery forces in that Mountain, in all likelihood, sallied forth since upon men in as dreadful and destructive a manner as upon their first eruption? Moreover, no Sign could be so improper, and so little suited to that sweet and gentle Oeconomy then to be introduc'd, under which (except in the singular instance of *Jerusalem*) all the Signs our Savior made choice of to seal his Mission and Doctrine with, were stamp'd with the characters of Love and Grace and Good-will. <sup>2</sup> The Apostle tells us, *We are not come unto the Mount that might not be touch'd, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest, and terrible sights, either in the letter, or in the spirit and mystery of them.* Finally, the words of the Text and of the

y Vid. Tract.  
cui tit. Vesu-  
vius ardens.

2 Heb. 12. 18,  
19.

Historians

Historians (as the Reader may easily observe) will not touch one another without some bending and wrestling in some of the instances proposed. Upon a consideration of the premises I am forc'd upon a conclusion quite counter to that of this learned Person, *Questionless these Terrors of Hesperiis were not the Scripture-Sign of the Son of Man,* no more then some fearful Earthquake, or inundation of the Sea upon any Country is now or shall be.

The more words have been bestowed to prove this flaming Mountain no intended Sign to the Age wherein it fell, not because I affect a glory in opposing my self to so great a Name; but because I perceive that little favor conferred upon the Doctor's conjectures concerning it, in the first Edition, to have proved some disservice to the Cause I designed to build.

It resteth now that we make inquiry into the value of those reputed Miracles, *New or Blazing-Stars*, (for I must not contend about words or method, while speaking to the People who are too gross for criticisms :) These have been entertained in all times with great Opinions, growing chiefly from a fond valuation of our selves and the little concerns of common life. We first conceit Man the *great measure* of things, that the greater World is but a larger Paraphrase



upon the less, carrying nothing but perpetual Analogies to some parts and faculties of his Body or Soul: and next, that he is the great End of things, and (though we are

a Prov. 16.4.

b Nat. Quæst.  
l. 7. de Comet.  
c. 1.

told a God made all things for himself) we imagine all things were made for Man; but to minister some way or other to an humane benefit. Hence we easily fancy no New Star or Comet shines from Heaven; but we are extremely concerned in the occasion, and therefore behold it presently with a great composedness [b *ignari utrum mirari debeamus an timere, as Seneca speaks*]. with thoughts divided between, those daughters of Ignorance, Wonder and Fear. Now because we cannot divine to what end of humane life these insolencies in Nature can be subservient beside that of Prefages, we take up here; and the rather, because apt to fancy that the Deaths of great Men, Wars, and mighty Changes in Government, create as great thoughts and passions in the Mind of God as of a Man: we conceit it a great *deorum* that no Person of name be born without observation, nor fall without some sympathy in Heaven and Earth, and then impose our pedantical measures of things upon God. And as we thus think our affairs great enough, & so our selves valuable enough, for

c Undenam  
constat Cometæ  
as ad aliquid  
nobis significandum  
usur-

pri? an aliunde quam ex vanitate quâ miseri turgescimus, dum digni nobis ipsi: videmur, propter quos hæc ostentia fiant? Gallend. Meteor. p. 116.

whose

whose sake God should be continually altering of the Ordinances of Heaven which proceed upon such excellent and mysterious Wisdom. But all these are onely *the shining thoughts* (as the word imports) of him that cares not how strong his Fancy and how weak his Reason be. What solid Reason have we to prefer Man the great End of things, when there are so many millions of Creatures in the Heavens and Earth and Sea whose Natures and Uses are wholly hidden from him? Is it not End great enough that God (who is Theater sufficient to himself) be satisfied to behold in them all some displays of his own Wisdom and Goodness? Or if these new Glories in the Heavens do serve Man, why must they serve the worst part of him, his Curiosity, and not rather his Piety, by teaching him to admire Him who doth great things past our finding out, *yea and Wonders without number?* What hath any man to do to call these or any other Prodigies *the Signs of God* without special commission from himself? Is it not looked upon as an high Usurpation in the Pope to coin more Sacraments than ever God warranted? and shall we obtrude upon him, as Divine Signs, what ever may seem worthy of the title to our shallow thoughts? Doth not the attributing of such ambiguous  
Signs

Signs to God, expose him to a suspicion, either that He *dare not* be more exprefs for fear he should prove mistaken; or that He *will not*, lest men should understand him.

Notwithstanding what hath been said both here and elsewhere upon the Argument before us, it would (I doubt) be interpreted a neglect, if not of my Cause, of Expectation and the great singularity of the occasion, if I should not be a little particular in reference to this *New Star* (to speak with the People) which hath of late so much ingrossed the common talk. Concerning it there are but these three heads of Inquiry.

*The Nature, the History, the Signification* thereof. As to its particular *Nature*, the more advised Philosophy of a Comet returns a *Non est inventus*, it is not yet found out.

And it need not be reputed a Wonder that there are some blanks in the Philosophy of

f *Wisd. 9. 16.* Heavenly Bodies, when we are so much posed in the things that are before us, that even *Paracelsus* wrote a Treatise *De mysteriis vermium*. There are Mysteries in Religion, Depths in Providence, Inscrutables in Nature, intended perhaps as the more equal Objects of Angelical then Humane Contemplation. As for the *History* thereof in reference to its motion, height, figure, color, duration, and the like, it is that which like a Picture might somewhat grace, but not at

all

all strengthen the Cause I am building up; and so would in this place be but a curious impertinence. It is onely the *signification* thereof which is a pertinent consideration in this Argument; the Opinion whereof I assert to have nothing but Fancy and a great prejudice to bear it self upon. For where is the Interpreter that can tell us what Event it foreshews, or to what Kingdom, or Persons, or when to succeed? Can any man then (that believes he ought not to think or speak of God at random) imagine that He speaks to Men by a Sign which signifies any thing, or nothing, as men please? Ask now a Wise-man whether he would express himself by a Sign that should signifie with certainty neither time, nor place, nor thing, nor person? And shall Wisdom it self be thought to make use of any such Cheverel-Signs, that may be stretch'd or strained in their significations at pleasure? When God would awaken Men by his Predictions of a Judgment, the *Vision was made plain* that he that *ran might read it*; the Prophet was appointed to proclaim the Burden of such a place, of such a nature, (for what is spoken to every body is spoken to none,) and why should we think that God speaks now by Signs of which no humane wisdom can make sense? It was indeed noted of old of the Oracle at *Delphi*, that ἐν λόγῳ, ἐν κρυπτῷ, πάντα

*Διὰ τῶν ὀμμάτων*, it neither plainly expresseth, nor perfectly concealeth, but onely intimates by some obscure signs and hints; now this was one of the *Depths of Satan*, who because he could not clearly foresee, and therefore durst not be expresse, chose to deliver himself oft-times by doubtful Signs, calculated so indifferently for the *Meridian* of any Event of things; that what-ever succeeded might be thought foreshewn in the Oracular Sign. But the God of Wisdom hath no need to take to such sorry shifts to secure himself in our Opinion of his Prescience. He clearly foresees, and therefore can and would clearly foreshew any great Event, if he judged it convenient for us to know it before it came to pass. But though we should give a significancy to this or such like insolencies in the Heavens, why must they be thought to prophesie onely evil things concerning us? Sure I am, they which have taken pains to review the Histories of such things with the Events succeeding, make a fairer report of them, representing them followed by as many fair as stormy days in Kingdoms: and the Heathens (whose Religion it was to observe such things) received them oftner as auspicious then inauspicious Omens; (the onely thing wherein our Modern Interpreters of Prodigies dissent from

g See a late  
Disc. of Co-  
mets by J.B.  
p. 6, 7, 8, 9.



§.3. *Of Prodigies Supernatural.*

from them, whose sourer humor admits them onely to the Opinion of Signs of Wrath and Messengers of Death.) But admit this Comet an indication of Good or Evil, to confine its Prefages to our Affairs, toucheth a little upon the Humor of those Men that will needs fulfil *Daniel* and the *Revelation* onely in *England*.

And thus we dismiss the Consideration of *Prodigies Supernatural*.

**CHAP.**

## CHAP. V.

*Remedies advised against the Superstition of  
Prodigies Signal.*

**T**Here are a company of men in the World, whose Melancholy fancies (like the Cyclops in the Poet) are perpetually imployed in framing thunder-boles for heaven to throw down upon that world themselves are fallen out with. Never doth the face of the sky appear mantled up in the clouds, but their timorous imaginations mold them into such antick figures, that they appear to them *ὡς βολαὶ εἰς τὸ χαλεπὸν ἐνεστηκῶτα* (as the <sup>a</sup> Apostle upon another occasion) a kind of visible parables, fitted for the season present, expressive of some approaching vengeance. There is scarce a night passeth them wherein they have not some *ὡς φεικῶδη καὶ πρᾶστα*, dreadful imaginations and monstrous visions (as Plutarch phraseth it) which tell them the fortunes of Kingdoms, or the fate of some great Persons. The vanity of which sort of men, the <sup>b</sup> Cynick chastiseth in a tart and true Sarcasm, They are very regardless of what they do when awake, but are hugely busy and solicitous about what phancies come into their heads when they are asleep. Some infe-

<sup>a</sup> Heb. 9.9.

<sup>b</sup> Ὅτι πρὸς ὃν  
μὴ ἀναπνεύσει  
ὑπάρχει ὁ πνεύματι,  
ὃν ὁ θεὸς δι-  
δοῦντες φαν-  
ταστοῦνται  
πολυπνεύ-  
μονες.  
Diog. Laert.  
l. 6.

infelicities of temper or education have betrayed some men to such singular measures of judgment and practise, that their souls scarce seem to come out of the same Limbs with those of other men. In matters of religious reference, *Revelations, vigorous impressions of Spirit, extasies, pretty allegories, parables, tabbalisms*, in matters Civil, *some old prophecy, mystick passages in Daniel and the Apocalyps, new and impracticable Ideas of government, strange Omens and Prodigies* (which like bladders shew bigger or less according as an airy Fancy swells and blows them up) are the great Compass by which they steer their judgments: and some of the men have (what is said of birds) a language by themselves, intelligible only by those of their own kind.

But what mean regards shall Scripture, Laws, sober counsels, and a prudential *Understanding of the times and what is fit to be done*, be entertained withal, if the light of knowledg in matters Sacred or Civil, be once thought to shine most clearly into such crackt and crazy brains, as are not seldom the most curious attenders of such things as these. And as Reason would suffer so would Religion, for the true fears thereof would be ready to fly away (like the Spirits of over-heated liquors) if overacted by such strong and continued jealousies of heaven

61 Chron. 12.

heaven, as the observation of Prodigies (in the latitude contended for) would certainly subdue the minds of men unto. Besides, no man (that believes himself) shall ever be able to possess himself in peace, while his inward house is haunted by such Spirits of fear as a Superstitious perswasion of Prodigies would be alway raising up within him.

In order therefore to a more perfect cure of so obstinate and dangerous a distemper of Mind, as the Opinion of Prodigies is, I shall advise the ensuing Remedies.

## SECT.

## SECT. I.

## Five Remedies proposed.

1. The discarding of all sower jealousies of God. The Divine goodness a Catholick acknowledgment shewn from Synesius: but contradicted by the doctrine of an envy in God and a delight to do evil, among the heathens, and too much countenanced by some Christians. This noted to influence the Opinion of Prodigies. The true end of Divine judgments. The advantage which right notions of God give to Piety: Plutarch. 2. The avoiding of any great fears or hopes in reference to things future. Men full of hope or fear desirous of Predictions and why: the vanity of that desire. 3. The study of Natural Philosophy: that effectual against the Superstition of Prodigies: because discovering the nature and end of them; and probably the Original of their observation: A conjecture concerning the first occasion of Chiromancy, Capnomancy, Oneiromancy, Augury, Haruspicy, Terasoscopy. The value of Semantick Philosophy among the Ancients. The roaring of the Sea why appointed by our Saviour as a sign of desolation to the Jews. 4. A great indifferency of mind as to this world. Persons solicitous in reference to this world most desirous to know its fortune. 5. The use of reason to judge the grounds of this and other Doctrine before we receive them. Who noted to declaim most against reason: the present Opinion noted to have none to support it.

**T**He first Sovereign remedy against this disease of the Mind is, *The discarding of all sower jealousies concerning God.* d Sy- d Synef. de Re-  
nesius hath observed that however the Na- gno. p.9.  
tions were δόξαι ἐν ἐργασίᾳ μακροῦ πο-  
distanced from each other (like the lines in  
the circumference) by very different Senti-  
ments in Reference unto God and Religion,



in other Matters; yet still ἀγαθὸν θεὸν ὑμῶν ἀποδύτες ἀποδύεσθαι, καὶ σοφοὶ δὴ μὴ καὶ ἀσσοφοὶ, all centured and met in this great doctrine, both wise and unwise, that God was a good, bountiful, and benign Being. The greater wonder it is that so many Doctrines among the Heathens and Christians too (which I am not here to take notice of) should be received with a *non obstante* to this native and easy sence of the Divine goodness and Philanthropy lodged in their Minds. That which my present Argument leads me to observe is, how apt the minds of men are to be leavened with this fowr conceit (which cannot dwell with a belief of God's goodness) which <sup>e</sup> Plutarch justly challengeth in *Herodotus*, that θεὸς οὐ πάντων φιλανθρώπος τε καὶ μακάριος, *The Deity is of an envious and troublesome disposition; that his counsels are especially taken up with the contrivances of new miseries for the hated world; then which, never did a more pestilential air breath from the bottomless pit, seizing the very vitals of Religion, and corrupting the earliest notions rising up in the Soul when conceiving of a God.*

<sup>e</sup> Plutarch.  
Περὶ τῆς Ἡ-  
ρώδοτος κα-  
κοῦ.

Hence grows this easy conclusion, that all Prodigies are a kind of Van-guard to give notice of the many troops of furies and miseries marching after: so that hated man may

may be tortured before he be killed, and may not have so much as the airy hopes of Felicity to refresh his laboring spirits with, nor be able to deceive his present pains so much as with a Dream. Among the *Heathens*, the observation and Expiation of all manner of Omens and Prodigies, was a sower fruit growing from this evil root especially, *perpetual jealousies of God*. For they thought he had an evil Eye, and could not behold a little good Fortune in the World, without a touch of Envy. And therefore *Camillus*, upon the taking of a rich City in *Hetruria*, makes this sudden address to the Gods, *Εὐχόμενος ὡς ἂν ἡμῶν ἀντὶ τοῦτο. ἵκεῖται τοῖς θεοῖς, καὶ μένος ἐνωργίας, ὀρχομαι, &c.* If we on the revenge of this happy Action, to the divine envy, I pray that some misfortune of mine may commute for that of my Country. And among our selves, some men (like the ancient Idolaters) shape out the God they worship in such dreadful forms as fright and amaze themselves, they phancy he is never so well satisfied as when some scenes of misery are before him; and therefore all strange events are readily interpreted the Angels of death, and the world thought to be hung round with the ensigns of Vengeance.

Whereas if men did not look upon God through the gross medium of these impatient

ent and envious humors which command themselves, it were not possible but he must be represented to them in more lovely colors: and they might easily understand all the evils sent down sometimes upon the World, to be (in the language of the Moralist) *τὸν ὅτι τοῖς ἡμαρτημάτων δεῖδν ἕκαστον*, only a Divine testimony given in against sin; and not intended the instances of ill-will, but to discipline the mad world into some sober and wise thoughts; and they would believe the fairer reports which Scripture makes of God, when telling us, *He doth not willingly grieve the children of men, that fury dwells not with him; that judgment is his strange work, &c.* And then would be easily persuaded that Prodigies come forth upon some other errand then to let them understand they must look to be speedily miserable.

Did men once believe the Goodness, Patience and long-suffering of God, they could not imagine he lets his creatures (as *Moses* did the Tables) fall out of his hands and break into disorder, as a discovery of his frequent anger. I shall dismiss this particular with that pertinent speech of *Plutarch*: *Let a man* (saith he) *set it down with himself, that he cannot present God with a more grateful sacrifice or more excellent service then to entertain true and good Opinions concerning him: whereby he shall avoid Superstition,*

ἔτι τὸ ὅτι ἄνθρωποι  
δοῦσαν ἔχουσιν  
πρὸς θεῶν,  
μηδὲν οἰόμε-  
ν ὅτι μᾶλλον  
μήτε δύσκειν,  
μήτε ποιήσκειν  
αὐτοῖς κεχα-  
ρισμένον, ὅ-  
θεν ἐλαττον  
ἀποδοῦναι  
κακὸν ἀντι-  
παρὶ τοῦ δει-  
σμονίας.  
De Isid. & O-  
frid.

perdition, an evil not much inferior to Atheism.

Secondly, *The avoiding of any great fears or hopes in reference to things future.* <sup>h</sup> Lucian well notes, that to a man big with any great fears or hopes, a foreknowledge of Events appears very necessary and desirable, because this brings his distracted thoughts to a point, and delivers him from the *tedium* attending all doubtful expectations of the future. Hence such a man is easily persuaded to attend to a Prophecy or Prodigy that offers him a promise of resolution. Besides, where the Soul is under the power of some great affection (as it alway is when solicitous about the issue of things) any odd accident is apt to make great impressions upon it; for when Reason is over-born, it is apt to measure things by prejudice and the Maxims of the people. Fear (like a crackt Glas) represents every strange event in very frightful forms to the ey of the mind, and will create its object where it cannot really find it. Moreover, when men will usurp upon God's Province, and charge their thoughts with the Future, he justly makes their sin their punishment, by delivering them to the observation of Prodigies and Omens, which fill them with more anxious and unquiet thoughts.

h τῷ τε δειδι-  
ωπὶ καὶ πρὸ ἐλ-  
πίου καὶ φόβου  
γνώσις ἀνα-  
γκασιώτατη τε καὶ  
ποθεινοτάτη.  
In ἁδδμ.

'Tis both our duty and our wisdom to at-

tend the business of the day, and to leave the issue of affairs with infinite Wisdom and goodness: and the rather, because if the Event shall be prosperous, there will be time enough to enjoy our happiness when it shall be present; we need not deflower it by a precocious joy, before we are espoused unto it. If adverse, what need we chew pills, and feel our miseries twice over: once in fear and again in presence. *Sufficient to each day is the present evil thereof*, it need not borrow from to morrow. It should be our care that Death do not surprize us to the eternity of another world, while staring after the futurity of this.

Thirdly, *The study of Natural Philosophy*. It is the nature of all knowledg to give a kind of strength and presence of mind to a man, but especially of Philosophy. This will secure us, as from the rocks of *Atheism*, because leading us into a notice of some First Cause, into which all the second do gradually ascend and finally resolve: so also from the shelves of *Superstition*, because acquainting us with the Second causes. For Fancy is apt to suggest very monstrous notions of those things of whose causes and natures we are unresolved: all which fly, like the shadows of the twilight before the approaching beams of knowledg. Philosophy leads us, as men do horses, close up to the

*in Ea religio  
propaganda est  
qua conjuncta  
est cum cogni-  
tione Naturæ;  
sic superstitionis  
stirpes omnes  
elidendæ  
sunt. Tul. De  
Divin. l. 2.*



the things we start at, and gives us a distinct view of what frightened us before, and so shames the weakness of our former fears. He that knows what slow conquests a flame makes upon any humid viscous matter, will not easily account every gentle fire continuing for some time in the air, a kind of flaming sword, miraculously appointed by God to drive the secure world out of its fool's paradise. Who so considers how possible it is for Springs sometimes to fail (nay how wonderful it is that they fail no oftner) cannot readily receive any breaches in the streams which hold of them, as the presages of some civil breaches in a State. Besides, Philosophy informs us of the methods of Nature, in <sup>k</sup> reserving immutability to the more retired parts of Heaven and Earth, but banishing the great instances of variation to the superior parts of Earth, and interiour of Heaven. Accordingly, to the *Earth-quakes, eruptions of strange fires, new fountaines, preternatural generations* (in all which the more central parts of this vast globe are not at all touched and concerned) there correspond in the Superficial parts of heaven, *mighty thunders, Comets, new stars appearing now and then, alteration in the figures of the planets, variety of new spots observed to rise and set in the body of the Sun, some, though rarer, failings of its usual splendor,*

<sup>k</sup> Verulam. cogit. De Nat. Rer. 19.

Moreover, Philosophy will very probably direct us to the true Original of Divination by *Prodigies*, and the other *Species* thereof, *Chiromancy*, *Capnomancy*, *Oneiromancy*, *Haruspicina*, *Augury*, in use among the Ancient Heathens: which was (if I mistake not) a Philosophick Divination (much studied of old) stretcht by Ignorance and Superstition beyond the limits of sobriety: for all these curious arts, however they are froth at the top, contain under them the good liquor of a useful Philosophy. There is a sober and Physical *Chiromancy*, for as the figures of the face carry some rude indications of those passions or dispositions of the mind which subtilty would dissemble, so the figures and colors of the lines in the *hand* make some general reports of the temperament of the body, and by consequence in what likelihood of life the person stands: *which* being exposed to common view and of more ready inspection, observation became more curious about it then other parts, otherwise perhaps as proper subjects of Art as that. In like manner, the Air having so subtile a perception of Wind rising, drought or moisture approaching, and quickly growing (though imperceptibly to our grosser senses) more or less quiet or condensd; these subtile varieties therein could be reported by nothing so readily

dily as by so soft and dissipable a body as  
 smoak, which might occasion a sober *Cap-*  
*nomancy*, whereby the experienced Artist  
 upon an observation of the inclination, co-  
 lor and consistence of the smoak made judg-  
 ment of the condition of the approaching  
 season. And thus, after reason and observa-  
 tion had assured the Ancients that the Soul  
 in sleep was *ἄνωπερ ἐρηχθῆ, καὶ κενὸν πάντων*, as *Arist. De Di-*  
*it were forsaken and empty of all its own* *vin. per In-*  
*rational motions* *καὶ κινηθεῖται κατὰ τὸ κιν-* *somn. c. 2.*  
*νόν*, easily moved according as some con-  
 tingent mover (disposition of the ambient  
 air without, or of the humors and spirits  
 within) might determine, and that there-  
 fore some strange diseases of body, and  
 sometimes alterations of Season, had been  
 foreseen in dreams, these rude observations  
 were at last licked into an Art [ *Physical*  
*Oneiromancy* ] in which Physicians from a  
 consideration of the dreams proceeded to a  
*Crisis* of the disposition of the person: and  
 many of the Maxims which instructed that  
 Art are yet extant in *Hippocrates* his litle  
 treatise *de Insomniis*. Thus likewise when  
 reason gave men this perswasion that Crea-  
 tures living in the open air, must needs have  
 a quicker impression from it then men that  
 live within doors; but especially birds who  
 live in the air freest and clearest, and therefore  
 by their voices and motion of flight more  
 apt

m Tull. de Di-  
vin. lib. 1. in  
init. Arat. in  
παυροῦ.  
Virgil. Georg.  
l. 1. sub fin.  
n L. Bacon.  
Nat. Hist.  
Cent. 9.

apt to express what they find; they ad-  
vanced the Art of *Natural Augury*, to make  
presages of weather from an attendance to  
the voices, high or low flight, and other  
motions of the birds of the air. Many of  
the rules whereof are delivered by <sup>m</sup> Anci-  
ent and <sup>n</sup> Modern writers. In like manner,  
the *Ancients* considering that beasts con-  
versing so much in the air, and living alway  
upon food ready drest, and that hath no  
noxious quality, derived from the corrup-  
ted air or earth, corrected by the fire as ours  
hath, might easily conceive that some signs  
of wholsom or pestilential seasons, of scar-  
city and plenty ensuing, might be disco-  
vered in the unusual colors and figures of  
their entrails: and therefore \* *Democritus*  
used to commend the wisdom of the Anci-  
ents in appointing a diligent inspection of  
the inwards of all sacrificed beasts, upon  
a long and critical observation of which,  
they advanced a *Physical Haruspicina*, by  
which they were enabled (no doubt) to a  
more exact judgment of the temper of the  
Earth and Air, and the healthfulness of the  
season ensuing then we can possibly make.  
And as long observation gave birth to these  
(as to other) Arts, so to *Teratoscopia*, which  
was anciently only a rational attendance to  
those affecting signs with which the Pro-  
vidence of Nature (that men might not

suffer

\* Democritus  
censet sapien-  
ter instituisse  
veteres, ut ho-  
stiarum im-  
molatarum  
inspicerentur  
exta, quorum  
ex habitu atq;  
ex colore tum  
salubritatis  
tum pestilen-  
tiae signa per-  
cipi, nonnun-  
quam etiam  
quae sit sterili-  
tas agrorum  
vel fertilitas  
futura. Tul.  
De Divin. l. 1.

suffer by surprise) was noted to preface her works of greater note. A taste of which Art we may receive from the Masters thereof.

o — *Ventis surgentibus, aut freta ponti* o *Virg. loc. cit.*  
*Incipiunt agitata tumescere, & aridus altis*  
*Montibus audiri fragor, aut resonantia longe*  
*Littora misceri, & nemo um increbescere*  
*murmur.*

Most of the sence and all the reason of which Verses (that the Reader and my self may be eased and benefited both at once). I shall deliver in the words of the p Lord *Nat. Hist. m.*  
*Bacon. The resounding of the Sea upon the p. 174.*  
*shore, and the murmur of winds in the woods,*  
*without apparent winds, shew wind to follow.*  
*For such winds breathing chiefly out of the*  
*Earth, are not at the first perceived, except*  
*they be pent by water or Wood. Mountains*  
*also have a quick perception of the dispositi-*  
*of the air to tempests, standing so near the*  
*Middle Region, the place in which, for the*  
*most part, they are bred. To Virgil (though*  
*indeed but Aratus made Latine, in this Ar-*  
*gument) I shall adde, the prognosticks of*  
*Aratus.*

q In Διοσημ.  
 m. p. 426.

Καὶ ὅτε νύκτα μέλαγχρόν ὅτ' αἰέρες αἰώσωσι  
 Ταφρία, καὶ δ' ὅππῃ ρυμοὶ ὑπολαλαγμένωνται  
 Δειδῆσαι κείνοισ ἀντὶ τὴν ὁδὸν ἐρχομένων  
 Πνέοντι.

The



*The frequent falls of Stars, by night,  
Drawing white trains of streaming light  
Receive as signs of winds to come  
That may they fall —*

Thus *Castor* and *Pollux* (those twin-lights, so called, seen sometimes about ships in the silences of the night) were anciently received as the indications of a quiet passage; because any disposition in the air to motion would soon have divorced those gentle fires. 'Twere easie to shew how much this *Semantick Philosophy*, in all the parts of it, was studied by the more ancient Philosophers, being so much recommended to them by the subtilty, pleasure and singular usefulness thereof to the ends of common life, but this would prove an impertinence in this place.

Now when some airs of this Doctrine of natural Prognosticks came among the rude multitude, it became as a *parable in the mouth of a fool*, which loseth much of its honor by being imperfectly propounded or impertinently applyed. They not understanding the rational connexion between sign and thing signified, thought the lines in the hand as proper indications of the Fortune of the person as of his temper: and wanting the maxims of Philosophy to measure their conceptions by, in reference to dreams,

as some difficult men thought they signified nothing, so some easie persons thought they might signify any thing: to the same rudeness of the people we may probably intitle the sober madness of seeking with that seriousness the presages of contingences in the motion of smoke, the chirping and flying of birds, the colors and figures of the *Æta*, as also that solemn Opinion of Prodigies as of the extraordinary signs from the Gods of some extraordinary events. They received the roaring of the waves of the sea as a very significant emblem of some doleful disaster in the state, [which common Opinion might perhaps occasion our Saviour to appoint *the Sea and the waves roaring*, Luk. 21. 25. among other prodigies, as his sign of the approaching desolation of *Jerusalem*.] And the hollow murmurs in groves and caves were thought the prophetick voices of some calamity approaching: (as appears from the forecited verse in *Virgil*, *Vox quoque per lucos*, &c.) And they looked upon *oblique per inane faces* (as *Lucan* assures us:) the slanting Meteors in the air, the water standing upon statues, (ignorantly stiled the sweating of them) and such like natural indications of a change in the Air, as the arbitrary signs of some mighty alterations in the state: and this (in all likelihood) because wanting the line of Philosophy to lay out  
their

their Notions aright in reference to those Signs by. Now when ignorance and mistake had once planted these wild conceits, it is easie to imagine how extreamly they would grow, even beyond their first occasions, in so rank a soil as the common people (the great Master of Superstition.)

s Magister super-  
stitionis

Populus : atq;  
in omni super-  
stitione sapi-  
entes stultis  
obsequuntur.  
Verulam. Ser.  
Fidel. 17.

The Orders and Causes of Nature, and the first Original of Divining by such infolencies thereof, well understood, would quickly chase away all those *Mormo's* (superstitious imaginations) which fright men in the night of their ignorance.

Fourthly, *A generous indifferency and deadness of mind as to the good or evil things of this World.* The more the heart of a man out-grows the joys and fears of this World, the more will all things therein appear to him much too little for the solemnity of a Prodigy; the more will he think nothing here of value enough to have its fall come with pomp and observation, and the less will he concern himself to know the future condition of such a vanity as this World is. It is onely when Men over-rate the World, and their hopes and felicities are much imbarcked therein, that they are solicitous to know its fortune, and are imprefive to any great fears in reference to its future state. The *Gentiles* of old, that could never lift up their heavy minds above the dull

t Tu in tantis  
erroribus es,  
ut existimes  
Deos mortium  
signa præ-  
mittere, &  
quidquam tam  
magnum ut  
perire mundus  
sciat? Sen.  
Nat. Quæst.  
l. 1. c. 1.

dull flats of things sensible and worldly, were the greatest Professors of the Arts of Divination by all manner of strange and unusual Accidents. And the *Jews* (to whom God had promised an Heaven on this side thereof in the liberal enjoyment of this World's Blessings) were very solicitous about the meaning of strange Providences, Signs of Times, and the issue of affairs: and God was pleased, by many Oracles, Signs and Prophecies, to accommodate himself to this low and worldly temper of theirs. But since the introduction of *a better hope*, the tenders of such spiritual Promises, we have scarce any notices given us of things future, by Oracles, Signs, or Prophecies (except some very dark ones in the *Revelation*, which some learned men conceive in a great measure already fulfilled) God hereby supposing our eyes now to be so fix'd upon the more clearly revealed felicities of another World, as not much to look down to the futurities of this.

Fifthly, Another effectual Remedy against this distemper of mind, is a *Catholicon*, A serious application of our Understandings to make search into the Reasons of this or any other pretending Doctrine of Religion. Before we venture our whole weight upon an Opinion, let us make trial whether it have strength enough to bear us. That man that

is cow'd and baffled out of all use of himself by those fashionable Solocisms, *Carnal Reason, private Spirit, corrupt Wisdom, proud Reason*, considers not that these are phrases which will fit any bodies mouth that thinks fit to use them; and that they can prevail with no man, but in some use of that very Reason which they tend to deter him from; and that it is the usage of Persons in Error, when Judgment is likely to pass against them, to plead that their Causes are *placita farinseca*, matters that belong to the cognizance of some other bar then that of Reason: that their Doctrines, being matters of Revelation, are to be tried onely *per pares*, the expresse Revelations contained in the great Rule of Faith, the sacred Scriptures, (which they have first suborned, by a false gloss, to give sentence for themselves,) or else, that being the publick sense, they ow no account to a private spirit. But when God hath commanded us to *search and prove*, and made us reasonable creatures, and so, habitually able and naturally desirous to understand the Grounds and Reasons of Doctrines tendred to us, and because implicit Faith is an honor due onely to God who is infallible, we ought (with all humble intentions not to impose our Judgments, but to satisfie them) to require the Reasons of them, and be able to make apology for the several



several branches of our Faith. Truth hath lost more by persons which would not consider, then that would not believe.

And if men would once be perswaded so far to honor themselves as not to take up their Faith upon trust, I question not but this Opinion of Prodigies would quickly sink in the World, which hath nothing to trust to but the tyranny of a great prejudice. Men have long received it, and the Pope in their bellies is very desirous to be thought infallible. The great strength of the Patrons thereof I have all along perceived to be like that of *Samson*; for it was harder to find where it lay then to cut it off, harder to find Objections then Answers.

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## SECT. II.

*No Signs of Times now to be expected.*

The discarding of that rash Principle, That God hath appointed to all Ages some extraordinary Signs of succeeding Times, a Remedy against the Superstition of Prodigies. There is a variety of Times, and why some Signs of these supposed by the Adversaries. This conceits a foundation of the Opinion of Prodigies. Two sorts of Signs noted. Why prudential conjectures of the state of future Times so full of uncertainty. Prodigies further proved no Signs of the Time. Vulgar Prophecies, Heavenly Aspects, and the pretended fulness of the iniquity of a Land, proved no divine indications. Why some Signs given of the Desolation of Jerusalem. Reasons why the Signs given to the Jews cannot encourage the expectation of any such now. Times hidden even from good men, and why. The evil of the common Doctrine of Signs of Times discovered in many particulars. The vanity of having a regard only to Times past, or to Times to come.

**L**Est all the fore-mentioned Remedies should fail of success, the last (which I am sure will reach the cure) which I shall advise, is, *The discarding of that rash Principle, That God hath appointed to all Ages some extraordinary Signs of succeeding Times.*

There is a variety of Times and Seasons, Times of temptation, Luk. 8. 13. Times of refreshment, Aët. 3. 19. Times of visitation, Luk. 19. 44. There is in divine Dispensations a kind of chequer-work of black and

u Eccles. 7. 14.

w 1 Cor. 7. 31.

white days taking place by turns. This Scene of this World is thus shifted and varied, that both the various At-

tributes

tributes of God, and Graces of his Divine Spirit in his Servants, may appear and act their parts by turns. Now Men are very impressible to this Perswasion, That as God in *Natura* hath ordained \* Signs of the Seasons V. Paul. Barenf. de Prasagitur. tempor. x Mar. 13. 28. ensuing, [for \* when the Trees put forth, we conclude that Summer is nigh; and that it will be weeping weather, when we see redness and lowering to sit upon the eye-lids of the morning;] so, that He hath in his Providence given us \* *Χηρεία ἡ χαρὴν*, Signs of the Seasons approaching, some tokens for good or evil; whereby we may know, as it were, what clothes to put on, whether we must prepare the garments of praise to entertain the joys, or cloath our selves with a great sorrow and humility to prevent or prepare for the evils which a few days may bring forth. And before they have rammed this Ground, they hastily advance this Conclusion, That *Prodigies* are a very great and proper Sign of the Times; because the dullest Eye may easily foresee an Evil in such Signs, though the Sons of Wisdom alone are able to foresee it in the probable Causes thereof.

That this is a very sinking and deceitful Ground to build this Opinion of Prodigies upon, will appear upon a brief Resolution of this Question [Whether or no, Now under the Times of the Gospel, God vouchsafe par-

*Particular Kingdoms any such extraordinary Signs of the Times as are contended for?* Particular Kingdoms, I say; For as for those Signs some speak so much of, of the fall of Antichrist, of the last Times, of the binding of Satan, of the last Judgment, &c. they are all of a very catholick concern, and are so loose and general, that (like the Heavenly Bodies) it is hard to determine their Aspects to any particular time or place: and if any such Signs, as they speak of, hereafter appear, they will serve rather as Arguments of God's Providence and Prescience, then as the Monitors of that just distance of time by which they are removed from those great Events of which they are (at large) the fore-runners: and therefore we dismiss the consideration of them as wholly foreign to our present Inquiry.

In order to a more distinct Answer to the Question proposed, I must necessarily premise this distinction of the supposed Signs of Times. There are, 1. Some barely indicative Signs, such as have no effective influence upon the Event succeeding, but serve as a kind of *Bath Col*, onely as some softer voice from Heaven to declare it to Persons of more purged and attentive ears: Such as are *Prodigies of all sorts*, the Aspects of Heaven, the fulness of the Iniquity of a Land, some old Prophecies, plausible

fible Parallels (in many instances) between  
 the Occurrences in former Times and our  
 own; some stated Periods of Time beyond  
 which some Bodies politic have not been  
 observed to continue without some *gray* <sup>Hof. 7.9.</sup>  
*hairs* (as the Prophet speaks,) some great  
 decays and alterations, some mystical Pro-  
 phecies or general Promises in Scripture;  
 forced by a strong Fancy to the narrow sense  
 and interest of some private times and oc-  
 casions. Many such kind of Signs there are,  
 which (because my business now is not to  
 feed Curiosity but to kill it) I purposely  
 omit. There are two other Signs spoken of  
 (of better name and credit) which we may  
 call *operative Signs*, such as seem to carry  
 their Effects in the womb of their own  
 powers and sufficiencies, having an active  
 influence thereupon, as the general bias and  
 inclination of a Nation; the precipitate  
 Counsels of Men in trust, and many such  
 like; which Politick Discourses, the Histo-  
 ry of Times, and a Mind much practised in  
 Civil matters, will best lead Men to a know-  
 ledg of.

This premised, I return an Answer to  
 the Question proposed, in these three Con-  
 clusions:

First, *There are some operative Signs of  
 particular Events, upon a view whereof a  
 very probable Judgment may be sometimes*



made by a wise Person, of the issue of affairs. Sometimes indeed Second Causes, which seem most pregnant with such Effects, shall have miscarrying wombs, and the most probable Counsels of the great Oracles of State (especially when owning no Power nor Providence superior to their own) shall be turned into foolishness, to give the World Arguments of a Divine Providence concerned in the affairs of men. But yet oft-times God permits things, as trees do, to fall that way to which, in the judgment of prudence, they seem to incline, that so humane Prudence (the image of Providence) may appear valuable to men, and the wise-man and the fool may not be thought to stand upon a level; and all things to run upon a Die.

Howsoever the World hath been so weak and wicked together as to give the Opinion of Divination to persons eminent for little besides ignorance and impudence, yet we find God in Scripture so far securing the honor of true Divination, as to confer the gift thereof generally upon men, and those of a pious and learned Education; and all the shadows thereof which may be yet found in the World, Solomon tells us dwell in a wise heart: <sup>b</sup> *The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; and that, not by consulting of Prodigies, but observing the seeds and causes in which it lies hid. As all other*

other gifts and abilities, once miraculous and extraordinary, of healing the sick; of speaking with tongues, of interpreting the Scriptures, of discerning of spirits, so this also, of foreseeing Events future, so far as they remain yet in the World, are reserved solely as the reward and honor of the diligent, ob-servant, and understanding Person. And many Examples in History there are of this prudent foresight, and these so strange, that by men, whose thoughts scarce reach beyond the entertainments of an hour, they would be concluded Prophecies.

Secondly, No operative Signs can be received in the unquestionable Intelligencers of the condition of succeeding Times: as the unquestionable Intelligencers, I say; And that,

(1.) Because God often accomplisheth his biggest Ends by means unpromising and almost invisible. He sometimes rows his purposes to harbor, while the means seem to look quite another way: and what is observed of the methods of God in Nature, holds true generally in the methods of his Providence; the greatest Works are performed by the least and most insensible Agents. He usually brings his biggest Ends to birth by the Midwifery of seeming casualties, which taken asunder are weak and vulgar; but viewed in consort, speak excel-

Multi in Rep. exercitati, ut de Atheniensi Solone accepimus, orientem tyrannidem multo ante prospiciunt, quos prudentes possumus dicere, divinos nullo modo possumus. Tul. de Divin.

d Isai. 60. 12.  
1 Cor. 1. 28.  
e Omnis actio naturalis per minima transigitur, aut saltem per illa quae minora sunt quam ut sensum feriant. Bacon. Orig. 2. sect. 7.

f Alian. Var. lent art and wisdom. The Historian hath  
 Hist. l. 12. c. 53. well observed *ἡ μείζων καὶ ἡ μικρὰ αἰ ἀρχαὶ*  
*δοκτοῦν τὴν οὐκ ἀγαθὴν ἀποφασίαν*, the origi-  
 nals of the greatest Wars which have hapned  
 seem to have been very contemptible, and  
 the like might have been observed of many  
 other great Events and Changes in the  
 World, which have been brought about  
 (like a great Ship by a very small helms) by  
 some very contemptible and unpromising  
 occasions. We find in History great King-  
 doms commencing suddenly (like a Snow-  
 ball) from an handful, increasing to a great-  
 ness in the eye of sense immovable, and at last  
 concluding in soil and dirt. But especially  
 observable is this Mystery of Divine Provi-  
 dence in the management of the Affairs of  
 the Church, which (like Christ the Head  
 thereof) springs as a root out of a dry ground,  
 grows from most unpromising beginnings,  
 and ows neither its planting nor increase to  
 the Arms of Princes. The observation of  
 which Secret in Providence drew forth that  
 Christian Speech in an Ethnick dress from  
*Machiavel; Fatorum via & rationes produ-*  
*cendorum effectuum, obscuriores sunt, quam*  
*ut a nobis intelligi queant.* God thus hangs  
 the greatest weights upon the smallest wires,  
 that things may slide off sweetly and with-  
 out noise, and Men may admire the depths  
 of his Wisdom when they see some matters  
 effected

effected before they could think they were  
a doing. And therefore much of the wis-  
dom of Divine providence is obscured by  
those Historians which shew only the face  
of business, and the pomp of some great  
Actions, but take no notice of those subtil  
and almost insensible occasions from whence  
they did arise.

2. God usually advanceth his greatest  
works and ends by circuits and pauses. Pro-  
vidence, especially in the advancement of the  
Church, hath several abrupt endings, and  
though in the works of Nature, God go-  
eth the nearest way to his ends, in the works  
of Providence he usually goeth about, and  
his work advanceth by such slow and silent  
progresses, that in the issue it seems to any  
but a prudent and severe observer the issue  
of time and chance, rather than any steady  
and well advised Understanding. And for  
this reason the Ancients are conceived in  
their fable of Pan to have attributed a  
rod or staff to him crooked at the upper  
end, because all the works of Divine Provi-  
dence are effected by circuits and oblique  
ways, so that one thing seems to be done,  
but some other is really done: as in the  
whole story of Joseph is especially obser-  
vable. And perhaps this mystery of Pro-  
vidence was emblemized in the prophetick vi-  
sion of a wheel that moved within a wheel,

*Cum id ar-  
tificii divini  
sit proprium ut  
maxima è mi-  
nimis suspen-  
dat, sit sape-  
numero ut hu-  
jusmodi Histo-  
ria [Chroni-  
ca] majora  
tantum per-  
secuta, nego-  
tiorum pom-  
pam potius  
et solemniam  
quam eorum  
veros somites  
et texturas  
subtiliores ex-  
stendat. Ve-  
rul. Aug. Sci-  
ent. l. 2. c. 7.*

*Vid. L. Bacon  
Sap. Vet. Fab.  
Pan. su. Nat.*

*Ezek. 1. 16.*

the

the ends God mainly intends being gradually and secretly promoted under the pretext and covert of some more visible and unsuspected turns, in Kingdoms or the lives of private persons.

3. God sometimes makes use of means great and pompous, to some ends weak and little in the eye of man. To what great actions all on the sudden, did he strengthen the hands of the *King of Sweden*. His victories drew the eyes of the world upon him, and 'twas concluded by some that Providence designed him the *Apocalyptic Angel* which should pour out one of the *Vials* upon the Beast; when behold, unexpectedly the current of his successes runs underground, and men engaged to believe God had ends more reserved and spiritual to accomplish by his arms than their shorthoughts could reach unto. And the successes (beyond the examples of History) of the forces lately on foot in these Nations, gave some to think them intended the instruments of some strange work, when all on the sudden <sup>1</sup> *a fire not blown did consume them*: and men were taught not to lay out their thoughts of God by their own little and shallow models. He acts sometimes without, but often beyond, second Causes, and hath usually ends to serve upon their motions and counsels, which they reach

! Job. 20. 26.



reach no more then a beast doth the intention of his Rider, Mic. 4. 11.  
Isai. 10. 7.

Thirdly, *There are no such indicative Signs of any changes in States and times as mention hath been made of.* None, I say, that God ever appointed or man may safely trust unto. A truth which I shall presume evince, if I can degrade (the most pretending signs) *Prodigies, Prophecies, Heavenly Aspects, and the fulness of the sin of a Nation,* from the honor of being Gods signs, and make it evident that men do but call upon their fancies to divine unto them and please themselves in the visions of their heads when they trust to such indications, neither Scripture nor solid reason warranting the reception of the instances mentioned as Gods tokens of any great plague or change in a State suddenly to ensue.

First therefore, I assert Prodigies are none of Gods designed Tokens. The credit of which assertion I might perhaps without presumption trust with the evidence of the precedent Discourse. But because I would not that this branch of our Method should be fruitless, I add this further consideration to assure it; *They are extremely disproportioned to those ends and purposes, for the service whereof they are so received.* For, whereas they are pretended the warnings of heaven, I would demand, Is it at all likely, that

that those men which will not be warned by all the great examples of Divine Justice extant in Sacred Writ, (in which they may see themselves executed in effigie) would ever learn wisdom from Prodiges, and those attested generally but upon the faith of two or three ignorant Spectators: or can it reasonably be imagined that those strong holds in the hearts of Men usually impregnable to all the batteries of Sermons and afflictions should ever yield upon the summons of any such supposed warning pieces whose bullets fly so much over them, whose threatened evils stay in airy and loose generals and point not to any particular persons, time, nature or condition of the judgment? certainly no. And therefore as good men need no such warnings, so bad men do not deserve them: so little good use in probability would they make of them if they were afforded. More sober therefore and advised the Doctrine couch'd in those Ethnick fables, wherein the Poets feign Nemesis (Divine vengeance) the Daughter of Oceanus and Nox, the strange Vicissitude of affairs in this world, and the dark and inscrutable counsels of heaven: and the Parca (supposed to deal out the destinies of men) to have had their habitation in a deep cave, (an Emblem of the depth of Providence) whence they oft issued forth

suddenly upon the secure and unwary world. But much more insufficient are these Prodigies for that other pretended end, *the securing the faith of God's foresight of events*. For should I foretell that there shall fall down upon the world some very great judgment, and neither tell *where* nor *when*, nor *by what instruments*, nor *why* nor *what judgment*, (and Prodigies foreshew no such circumstances) would not every advised person certainly conclude, I had nothing of Divine fore-sight in me, besides the affectation thereof? And therefore 'tis much safer to let brutish persons shake this *Ark of God*. (the Attribute of his Prescience) as they please, then that the unhallowed hand of a Prodigy should be made use of, which doth but profane what it seems to assist.

2. Vulgar Prophecies are not to be received as any Signs of future times. The world hath always swarmed with such things especially in times of some publick heats and contentions. Thus we read that during the civil Wars between *Cæsar* and *Pompey*, neither side wanted Prophets which gave them courage to proceed and hope to prevail. And that when the civil wars were hottest between *York & Lancaster*, books of beasts and babies were exceeding rife and currant in every quarter and corner of the Realm, either side applying and interpreting these prophetick emblems

o V. L. Howards Defensar  
against suppo-  
sed Prophe-  
cies, c. 24.

emblems as they stood affected to the title. And this is a sign that most of these predictions derive not from the Spirit of truth, but are the conjectures or the wishes of subtil men disguised in the dress of Prophecy, to gain reverence and confidence to that Cause themselves have a kindness for. It is yet a greater ground of Suspicion that these prophecies come not forth from God, who alone is able to declare the end from the beginning, that they are delivered generally by persons which have none of those great qualities which made the faces of the true Prophets of old, to shine before men. It is with me a pregnant argument that Wisdom was never very friendly to the World, that it hath been so prone in all times to receive pretended Enthusiasm and prescience with more sacred regards then laws and wise men, and yet at the same time have given the glory of these gifts to men of the weakest heads or worst lives, *P to Madmen, Persons transported by the heats of a fever, men in furies and ecstacies, star-gazers, fortune-tellers, Women* (for such were the Sibylline Oracles delivered by) *critical observers of Omens and Prodigies, Wizards, persons that declaim with much earnestness against* (what they cannot value) *Humane learning; and such as* (like old men) *see and know least of things*

near

ἢ τὸ βαλὼν  
 σμὸν καὶ μα-  
 ντικὰς μα-  
 τὰ πικρὰ  
 πολλὰ ἔχει  
 ὅταν γὰρ ἐν-  
 θουσιαστικῶς  
 καὶ θυμωδῶς  
 καὶ παρορμητικῶς  
 ἔκ. Plut. de  
 Defec. Orat.

near and present, have been often thought to see things at distance and in futurity, most exactly and distinctly. Nor if we should admit these Prophecies to the opinion of Divine Enthusiasms, are they therefore to be attended and trusted to as the distinct signs of the future or present time, both because many of them give an uncertain sound as to the particular time of accomplishment, and besides are generally very perplext and winding in their terms. Even of the Divine Prophecies a Learned man hath ventured to say, *Si usque ab illis temporibus quæ Christi adventum aliquot sæculis antecesserunt, ad hanc ætatem nostram rerum memoriam repetas, reperies neminem unquam extitisse, qui tantum se in tempus futurum immiserit, quique sit ausus à Vatum scriptis divinare quid esset futurum, qui non lapsus sit in fædissimos errores quos res ipsa aliquando confutarunt.* These lapses of the learned, that ventured to be particular about the sense and season of Divine Prophecies, may serve to discourage the curiosity of Inquiries into times to come, and to assure us that Events are the best Interpreters of Prophecies, and that God intended them especially for the benefit of the Ages wherein they should appear fulfilled, to whom they serve as the Seals of his Providence, Prescience, and Divine Authority of those Scriptures where-

q Amyrald in  
Præf. ad Com.  
in Psalm.



wherein they are delivered.

3. The Various aspects of heaven are no intended signs of times: for the contrary Events of things do generally make or prove *the Diviners* by them mad; and the greatest and most wonderful change in state that ever hapned, in the restauration of His Sacred Majesty in Peace and honor, was not so much as dreamed of by all the Privy-Councillers to the stars; and the heavenly bodies are so disposed as not to make by their order of placing any one equal figure or image, as it were on set purpose to discompose the fancies of Idolaters and Diviners by them; and the presages by them of the weather are so generally false, that the Astrologers *hinc gloriam captant si cujuspiam mendacia pauciora quam alterius fuerint* (as *Maimonides* smartly) seek a glory from hence, if the lies of one be fewer then of some other. Besides, the supposed signs in heaven are the meer creatures of necessity and fancy. For (as the *Greek Poet* tells us) when men could not give nor learn a name for so vast a number of stars, they thought fit to throw a great many into some constellation, that one being thus, with as much order as Nature would allow, added to another,

*1 Praefat. in  
Sed. Zer. apud  
D. Pocock.  
Port. Mos. p. 21*

*2 Arat. in  
parvum.*

Εἰδεα σερμαίνοντες, ἀπαρ δὲ ὀνόματα ἔχοντες

Ἄς εἰ —

they might signifie some kind of forms, and so the stars might become distinguishable by their names.

Besides, those titles of Mercury, Saturn and Mars, &c. whereby the Planets are distinguished, are not originally owing to any distinct Understanding of the Specifick vertues and influences of those stars (for what experience could teach them?)

but to an ancient Usage among the Eastern people, first to honor, and at last to worship their departed Hero's in some star or constellation dedicated to them and carrying their names. Now then can it with reason be conceived that these planets and signs indicate any futurity, which men, had they so pleased, might have molded into other figures, and which borrowed their names not from philosophy but chance? But because this Subject *Astrology* scarce dwells within the suburbs of my present Argument, and my pains have been wlately so happily superseded, I shall dismiss this particular with a conjecture concerning the Original of this Specious vanity, which seems to have been, a despair in some vain minds to reach the name and eminence of some former Masters in Astronomy, and to gain reputation by any new and

*Vid. Jacob. Bolduc. de Eccl. ante leg. l. 2. c. 19. u Act. 7. 43.*

*w D. H. More. Myst. Godliness. l. 7. c. 14. 15. 16.*

Y

more

y V. Gassend.  
Exercit. in  
Fluddan. Phi-  
los. Par. 4. c. 7.  
Obj. 1.

more solid notions in that Science then they had delivered: and therefore endeavored to draw the eyes of men upon them by a Romantick Astronomy: An Art of prefiging by the stars, set off with the pomp of new terms and phrases. Thus when the more Modern Rabbins were under a despair of exceeding or equalling the Traditional and Talmudical Commentators upon their Law they started y a Grammatical *Cabbala* to serve their ambition upon, wherein their criticisms about the form, cohäfion, disruption, shutting, opening, tortuosity, length, shortness, defect, eminence, coronation, order, numeral value of the letters, are infinite. Thus when a more simple and practical Divinity, and the literal way of expounding Scriptures, (most in use in the first Ages of the Church) became a field so beaten that no new game could well be started therein, after times endeavoured to serve Opinion upon some witty allegories upon the Text, and the Subtilties of the School. But to return.

4. Neither is the pretended fulness of the iniquity of a land, a sign of the times. *The iniquity of the times* is a theme which Discontent useth to sanctifie it discourses with, and men think themselves wise and religious both at once, when they have laid down some signs to declare the fulness of  
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it by. But certainly for men to determine of this *fulneſſ* is to intrude into Gods counſels; the *Ephah* ſtands by him alone, and he only knows how near it is to filling. Beſides, men are very apt to eſtimate the *fulneſſ of the iniquity of a land*, by falſe meaſures, for *the wicked* and *the godly* are terms of diſtinction (with ſome) not ſo much of the manners of men as of their party; and all ſhall be delivered by them to the Devil that ſit out of their little circle of Opinions. Not but that I think ſome Ages of a more coarſe and unhappy mettall then others, and the iniquity of ſome more groſs and daring then of other times; and when they are ſo indeed, Gods Miniſters are not to permit men like ſwine to ſleep in their mire, without denouncing Gods judgments againſt them. But I ſay, men ought not to preſcribe bounds to the long-ſuffering of God, or time and manner to his Juſtice, or to meaſure his patience by their own, nor to tell the world when Gods repentings are juſt come to an end.

The truth hitherto contended for, ſtands incumbred with a double objection which I muſt endeavour to free it from. (1.) We *Obj. 1.* are told that God gave the Jews ſome ſigns of the time, and particularly *fearful ſights and great ſigns from heaven* as his Monitors of the approaching deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*.

*Jerusalem* and the Jewish Polity: and therefore why may not some signs be now expected, and such sights so acknowledged when ever happening? I answer: Although enough hath been already said concerning those signs and sights, yet because where mens ears are obstructed with a great prejudice, that man must *speak once yea twice* that expects to be heard, to this forked Objection I return these five considerations.

1. *The peculiar circumstances of those times seemed to require some such signs.* For the Jews required signs from heaven, and God would not be wanting to any probable means and motives of their repentance; and the Jewish Oeconomy commenced in fearful sights at Mount *Sinai*, and great signs from heaven, now fit it was its conclusion should somewhat resemble the solemnity of its beginning. Besides, these signs served as merciful warnings to *Christ's* followers to *Mat. 24. 16.* hasten their <sup>2</sup> escape from that house (that City) which was ready to fall upon them, and involve them in its ruines: and which therefore they made such a prudent use of that at *Titus's* besieging of the City there was not <sup>a</sup> one Christian left in it. Moreover, they served gradually to wean the hearts of his Disciples from *Jerusalem* (once the *light of their eyes*) of whose determined desolation

<sup>a</sup>Vid. *D. Hammond. Annot. in Rev. c. 7. v. 3. 4.*



tion the many signs our Savior foretold, gave them such full and repeated assurances, But the chief reason of these signs was (I conceive) our Saviours purpose to satisfie that demand of his Disciples, *what shall be the sign when all these things shall come to pass?* which demand proceeded upon the usage of the Prophets, when foretelling some matter which it did much import the people to believe, presently, to confirm that particular prophecy by some sign, to come to pass in a lesser compass of time then their principal prediction: Accordingly our Saviour gave them the signs and seals of his present prophecy; which signs when they saw come to pass, they might rest assured that his principal prophecy was certainly and suddenly to be accomplished. And prodigies seem'd very proper signs (as was noted before) of this foretold desolation, because of that Opinion which men in that Age had of such Errors of Nature,

2. *The Calamities foretold by those signs were great, without example.* Josephus calls them *πίδα τῶν σημείων ἀξία*, *c* *miserics* *c* Mat. 24. 21, - *worthy of some signs.* These signs came Dan. 12. 1, not forth as the Heraulds of some petty war, or to precede the funerals of some great Personage, but (as it is called) *a great tribulation, such as was not since the world began, nor ever shall be.*

*Exemploque carens, & nulli cognitus avo  
Luctus erat.*

Now Divine Providence, having thus preferred Prodigies as the presages of so wonderful a desolation, seems to assure that they are not to be expected nor expounded the real prophecies of any common burdens.

3. *The destruction of Jerusalem was a type and picture of the final destruction of the World.* Now fit it was that the fearful alterations in the frame of Nature attendant on the latter, should be a little shadowed out in the fearful sights and prodigies which ushered the former. Besides, the consternations of soul and saylings of heart which these foregoing signs wrought in some men, before the decree brake forth, made the destruction of *Jerusalem* (in all the circumstances thereof) the more lively type not only of the terrors of the last judgment, but of those horrors and sinking of spirit in bad men which no question shall go before it.

4. *These Prodigies were expressly foretold, and particularly appointed by God as his signs to that Age.* Our Saviour foretold that *strange sights and great signs from heaven* would be the fore-runners of that desolation which he had prophesied of. And 'tis the  
con-

conjecture of some learned Jewish and Christian Expositors, that *the opening of the gates of the Temple* (some time before its ruins) of their own accord, though of such massive brass, that they could not be shut or opened (if we credit *Josephus*) without the twisted strength of twenty men, and though secured with great bars of iron, was the accomplishment of the prophecy of *Zachariah*, chap. II. 1. *Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy Cedars*: Where by *Lebanon* they understand the Temple built especially of the Cedars there growing, as it is elsewhere in the<sup>d</sup> Prophets used to signify. And *Munster* upon the place tells us that one of the Jewish Doctors upon the occasion of this Spontaneous opening of its doors, thus rebukes the Temple: *Ego cognosco imminere tui desolationem, juxta Vaticinium Zachariæ, qui dixit, Aperi Libane portas tuas*. Which conjecture upon the foregoing part of the verse, if it could be thought valuable, would encourage us to fix the accomplishment of the latter part thereof [*that the fire may devour thy Cedars*] in that other Prodigy mentioned in <sup>e</sup> *Tacitus* together with this, *the strange flashings of fire into the Temple from the clouds*. But to leave these conjectures to shift as they can, certain it is some Prodigies were of divine appointment; but

<sup>d</sup> Ezek. 17:3.  
Hab. 2. 17.  
Where the  
Chald. Par.  
in stead of Le-  
banon reads  
בית מקדש  
the house of  
the Sanctuary,

<sup>e</sup> *Expansa subito fores delubri, &c. &c.*  
subito nubium  
igne visum  
collucere templum, &c.  
*Tacit. Hist. l. 1.*

what patent can be shewn from the Book of God, whereby any much less all the fore-mentioned Prodigies, hold the place and honor of Divine signs now? Besides, our Blessed Saviour's extraordinary prediction of those Prodigies as his signs to that Generation, seems rather to assure them not intended the common fore-runners of any great plagues and wars, and that no good *crisis* can be ordinarily made of the future condition of a State by a regard to any such, in themselves doubtfull, indications: For what need of his predictions of such signs, if they were to fall out by a kind of common rule and law of Providence? and how unnecessary had it been to appoint such accidents for signs of evil, which are supposed to draw after them a *Series* of evils with so great a constancy, that they seem (without a prophet) to appoint themselves the signs of the times?

But (2) It is further objected in the words of *Job*: *Why seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his daies?* that is, why at least do not wise and good men (stiled in Scripture the persons *which know God*) see the times of great mercies or judgments (usually call'd *God's daies*, as was noted before) when as yet at distance and approaching?

I answer; Even good men (like men in a mist) though they can see their way, yet cannot see far before them, for very good Reasons: *viz.* \* That so the knowledg of the good or evil of the time to come may not disturb the duty of the time present: \* That not knowing in what time or maner our Master will come unto us, we might be alway upon our watch: \* That we might honor God with an heroical Faith, following of him, like *Abraham*, not knowing whither we go. It is a sign we have great Opinions of our Pilot's skill and integrity, when we can sleep securely, not knowing particularly what course he steers: \* That God might teach us to walk by the Rules of his Word and the Maxims of Prudence, and not the issue of things. \* Besides, the knowledg of God's Counsels is the Prerogative onely of our Savior; He onely is the *great Numberer of Secrets* (as the word signifies *Dan. 8. 13.*) It is honor great enough for us to be the *Children of the Bride-chamber* to the King of Heaven, He onely must be the Companion of his Counsels. Finally, This knowledg is a curious and unnecessary knowledg; serves not our real benefit at all, and God (as *Vives* notes) hath so appointed, *ut ad minime necessaria minimum lucis acciperemus*. Scripture acquaints us not with the figures of our Savior's person, nor the usages of



of his life before his publick Ministry, nor the methods of the Divine Decrees, nor the orders of the Angelical Hierarchy: and multitudes of Questions referring to the future state, it remits to the Solution of our Great *Elias* at his second Coming. So unnecessary did our Savior seem to judg this knowledg, that his Prophecies, if all put together, would not much exceed the Writings of the least of the Minor Prophets, though himself the Great Prophet of his Church. God will recommend to us the plainness of his Precepts which we *must* know, by the obscurity of his Providences which we *need not*.

From all this it appears that Times and Seasons are especially reserved in God's Power and Counsel, and that it is our wisdom to study rather how we may *redeem the present time*, then understand the future. As for that threed-bare Argument therefore, *Signs of future Times*, I could heartily wish it might be worn no longer in Writings and Sermons, because (like a bladder) it is full of nothing but air and vanity; and present things shew of color, and are valued but according to the light men stand in, and this shall be a sign of Mercy to one, which to another shall be a sign of a Judgment: and because the men whom these pretended Signs are intended to deter from any course of

g Vid. F. Ger-  
son. Serm. de  
signis ruin.  
Eccles.

of Sin, start at them possibly at first (as birds do at the images of a man in the fields) but afterward sit down upon them and neglect them, perceiving in the issue of things, that they are devoid of (life and motion) truth and certainty: and so these false fears in Religion may chance to discredit the true, as the *adventitious* heat in bodies oft-times supplants and betrays the *natural*. Moreover, all such Signs of Times do but tender the short and narrow thoughts of a Man as the Standard of God's, and to make men think the thoughts of occasions which are in their mind are but the counter-part of those which are in his; and they tend to detain people always in a gazing and expecting posture, so that they compose not to the work and duty of the day. And besides, may encourage rash and seditious purposes in them; and therefore perhaps the Wisdom of the State may in time see reason to interdict the superstitious publication of Prodigies, under as severe a penalty as it hath old Prophecies; all being but the *ignes fatui* leading to the bogs of Sedition, by amuzing men with a false light, the pretended knowledg of the signs and state of future Times.

The more hath been said against this common Doctrine of Signs, because I know how extreamly some weaker heads have been

been intoxicated with it : the Signs of the Fall of Antichrist, of the Personal Reign, of the Saints ruling the Earth, of where God will be next, are the things that dwell upon their thoughts and lips : and as it is the vanity of some men that the studies of times long past do so wholly ingross them and command their admirations, that they will scarce look upon a Book, reverence a Person, value a Notion, understand an Opinion, consider the *genius*, use the phrases, which the Time present affords ; so others are as much taken up with the Times to come, and live altogether upon reversion : what a *gusto* have they for a Prophecy, and for some spiritual person that pretends to have gotten the understanding of the *Revelation* upon his knees ! In the mean while opportunities for Wisdom fly away from them, their thoughts are taken up with fine Nothings, and a plain Discourse about Charity and Justice hath no relish to their palats used to such luscious food, and the men are always in doubt whether it be yet a good hour to begin to fear God and honor their Prince in.

## CHAP. VI.

*Prejudices against the precedent Discourse removed.*

- 1 *Prejudice.* That it takes off the force of that Argument to Piety the People are most capable of. Answered in three particulars. The great evil of pious frauds noted in several instances. An account from Reason of the sudden Reformation of men from Gentilism and Popery. Prodigies noted more prejudicial to the ends of Religion then serviceable. The common custom of training up the People to Religion by childish ways: The great evil thereof noted. No man to be cheated into Truth or Virtue.
- 2 *Prejud.* That the Discourse encourageth practical Atheism, answered. Superstition and Atheism nearly related. What there is in this common Opinion of Prodigies commendable, and to be still admitted.

**H**AVING tendred those Reasons, satisfied those Objections, advised those Remedies, which I conceived of greatest consideration in the present Argument, rather to take a further occasion of serving Truth then Opinion, I shall endeavor the Vindication of the precedent Undertaking from a double Charge which I perceive drawn up against it:

1. It stands challenged as an attempt greatly prejudicial to the just Interest of Religion and good life.
2. That (as a necessary consequent hereof) it gives a great confidence to Atheism.

First,

Prejud. I.

First, It is urged against it, that admit the truth on my side, yet the declaring thereof thus *on the house tops* is a great disservice to Religion; because it takes off the edge of that argument to virtue and repentance which the heavy multitude are the most capable hearers of. Let the fears of a Comet or a Monster be as vain as they are pretended, and admit these Signs (like Idols) to have no more of Divine in them then Opinion gives them, yet while the imaginations of men concerning them are strong and serious, and they receive them as the Monitors of some vengeance, they may in virtue of that Opinion hugely influence good life. The greatest part of Men (what is said of some Insects) carry their brains in their eyes, and can entertain no fear towards God, but what their senses tutor them into. Arguments are things too fine and abstract to touch upon their coarser Souls. Children in understanding must be frighted from the pit by fantastick fears.

I doubt not to rub off the guilt of this specious Objection, by opposing to it these three Considerations:

1. *Religion hath no need of any such fineness to procure its reception in the minds of men.* Christian Religion is a soil productive enough of all the *fruits of righteousness* by its own native heat and strength; so that

to



to throw upon it the dung of any Relations of dreadful Prodigies, Legends of Apparitions and Castles in the Air, is not to assist it, but disparage it. Let us call men to a serious attendance to those mighty Arguments to Piety wrapt up in the Life, Miracles, Death and Resurrection of our Lord, the rewards of Virtue bigger then their thoughts laid before their hopes in Scripture, the certainty and severity of Judgment, the follies wrapt up in every sinful choice, the great correspondence of all the Duties incumbent on us, to all our Notions of fit and just; and we shall find these consecrated weapons of infinite more force against the powers of the dark Kingdom, then the stories of a Peartree that blossom'd out of season, the drumming of a Spirit, a scuffle among Crows, and the bloody tinctures of a Pond, which some laugh at, and others entertain with some confused or slight fears, as conceiving they declare the death of Kings or Nobles, or the execution of that party of Men which stand branded already in their thoughts with the title of the Wicked and Ungodly. And therefore let us perswade our selves it is to be wise and pious both at once to cast about for no other instruments to advance Religion then these God hath already supplied it with; and not to think his interest might be managed with greater

greater advantage; if he would be advised by us, and not trust it soly with those unpromising means of his own appointment. But it hath been the sin and folly of most Ages to think the *cords* whereby God would draw men to himself had not strength enough for their end, and therefore would be always twisting their own Fancies and Inventions about them; and have thought it fitter to teach the Fear of the Lord by the Doctrines of Men, then the sacred Principles of Religion. But how well those little arts have succeeded, will appear from our next Consideration.

2. *All pious frauds have ever concluded at last in Superstition or Atheism, or the ruine of that Cause and Party that used them, or in all these.* When ever men have come with their *new pieces* (new fetches and subtilties) to fill up some supposed rent in the old garment of Religion, the rent hath perpetually been made worse. Were it pertinent, it were easie to justifie this truth with a cloud of instances: one or two, of many, that will best suit my present Argument I shall take notice of. The ancient Heathens, in fear lest the traditional notices they had of the mighty Works of God in the Ages before them, and those native seeds of Virtue sown in the hearts of men by the hand of Nature, would not, if they did *ταὺ τὰ θεῶν γινώσκοντες ἀνθρώποις* (in

(in the language of Eusebius) well husband and cultivate those seeds of God by good precepts and education, grow (with the Blessing of Heaven) into a competent harvest of piety towards God, and in good measure secure his honor and acknowledgment in the World; they cast about for Engines of greater force and power to move the heavy multitude withal. They thought there was not Majesty enough in the face of God, if duly represented, to awe Men into a fear and reverence of Him, and therefore they put a vizard upon his face, reported him

λυπτερόν & βλαβερόν, a sour, hurtful, touchy Being, and set him forth incompass'd with Thunderbolts, Tridents, Dragons, Firebands, Furies, and what ever is apt to make sad and solemn thoughts in a soft and vulgar imagination. Thus & Strabo tells us, that their ancient Professors of Divinity used

Strabo  
Geogr. l. 1.

δημαγωγὴν & στρατηγὴν τὰ πλήθη, to lead and regulate the rude multitude by relating καλὰς καὶ κακὰς δεινὰς & φόβους καὶ ἀπειλάς ἢ διὰ λόγων ἢ διὰ τύπων ἀοράτων τιῶν, the vengeance with the Gods, horrors, and threats by words or some invisible types of terror: Now the Reason

he gives of this usage is much of color with that of our Adversaries (so Logick allows me to call dissenting Friends) <sup>h</sup> For it is (saith

ἡ οὐ γὰρ ὅχλον τῶν καὶ πῶς τοῖς κακοῖς ἐπαγαγεῖν λόγον διωκτὸν φιλοσοφῶν καὶ περὶ ἀρετῆς καὶ περὶ εὐσεβείας καὶ ὁσιότητος καὶ πίστεως, ἀλλὰ διὰ δεισιδαιμονίας· τὸ τοιοῦτον δὲ ἐκ ἀνδρῶν μυθοποιίας καὶ παραβολῶν.

Z

he)

he) a matter impossible to draw and call over a crowd of Women, and the mixt populacy, to Religion, Piety, and a sober belief, by a Philosophical Discourse; but this must be effected by Superstition: a Principle not to be laid without the relating of Fables and Prodigies. But what was the issue of all this juggling in Religion? In some, Superstition, a dry infid and heartless devotion toward God, exprest in an infinity of Februations and empty forms: in others, Atheism, and a tacit scorn of all Religion; as appears from

ἡ Αἰγὶς καὶ τρι-  
αινα καὶ λαμ-  
πάδες καὶ δρά-  
κοντες καὶ θυ-  
ράκια καὶ ἄλλα  
θεῶν ὅπλα,  
μύθοι καὶ πα-  
σα θεολογία  
ἀρχαῖα.

what Strabo further adds: *All the Thunderbolts, Tridents, Firebrands, Serpents, and the other Artillery which the easie multitude suppose in the hands of the Gods, are meer Legends, and so is all the ancient Divinity: but made use of as vizards and bug-bears* *πρὸς τὰς νηπιόφρονας, to fright fools and children with* into Government and Religion. If then Strabo, and other men as sharp-sighted as he, could see through the Religion of their Times, and had not another of a more solid composure to fix upon, what did they but cast out the Devil of Superstition by the worse Devil of Atheism?

Thus Superstition and Atheism were the immediate consequents of these religious Sophisms, but the final was the total overthrow of the *Gentile* Worship: for the cheats which were used to aw the people with, were

were of so coarse a thread, that a little light was sufficient for the discovery; whereupon they were so suddenly and almost universally thrown off by them with an infinite impatience, mauger all the powers of States and subtilties of Philosophers to the contrary. For though I doubt not but the mighty prevalence of Christianity, upon the first publication thereof in the World, was owing to the Power of God which did assist it, yet I think this partial account thereof may be given to Reason, *viz.* The forgeries with which men had been long abused, were too gross to bear the light which came among them, and therefore were forsaken with the highest averfations by the people, who because they trust so much, have the greatest abhorrence of a cheat when once it is detected. One of the Ancients therefore speaking of those dreadful Images and stories of the Gods, with which subtil persons endeavored to fright those to the Religion (then in fashion) they despaired to perswade, thus delivers himself: *Hæc*

*omnia cum essent male composita, terrori primum fuere mortalibus; dehinc consumpta novitate, quasi ex longa aegritudine convalescentibus hominibus, natus est quidam ex admiratione contemptus. Sic paulatim quod stuperat animus ausus est diligenter inquirere, & statim in arcana fictarum & vanarum*

*k* *Ful. Firmic. de Error. Prof. Relig.*



*Superstitionum sagax misit ingenium. Tunc ex assiduis tractatibus, latentium ratione collecta, pervenit ad causas: ut profanarum religionum miseranda commenta, humanum genus primum disceret, deinde contemneret, tertio recusaret.* And that sudden and almost general consent of people in the last Age (like the breaking forth of many waters) to bear down Popery before them, is very much salvable by some such rational consideration as this; They had been long imposed upon by cheats almost gross enough to be felt, *the sweating and moving of Images, spurious Reliques, impudent Legends of Miracles and Apparitions of Saints, empty and idle Shews and Forms, the coarse Doctrines of Indulgences and Transubstantiation,* and the like; and men quickly hated this *blear-ey'd Religion*, when a little light came among them, which they hugged in the night of their ignorance. For it cannot reasonably be presumed, that the hundred part of the men that turned from *Gentilism* or *Popery*, did it upon principles of understanding, and a sincere love of truth. And therefore I think the fall of the Papal Interest may with greater certainty be foreseen, in the continuance of these heaviest of impostures, then in all the unanswerable Arguments of the Learned used against them (which are seldom understood against Education and Interest)

terest,) for all their Puppet-play must needs become ridiculous, and the men that shew it, as soon as some publick Interest may advise to let the curtain be drawn aside, the *vail* <sup>2 Thes 2. 8, 9, 10.</sup> taken from before the peoples eyes.

To return: The Doctrine of Prodigies is (if not in the intention of the Assertors thereof, yet) in it self, a *pious fraud*; for they have been thought a kind of blunter wedges provided by divine Wisdom to work upon those knotty tempers, upon which those instruments of a finer Edg, *Arguments* and *Moral Discourses*, can do no good. But what an evil influence they had upon the principles and practices of the Heathens of old, hath been already observed. And what do they tend to among our selves, but to make men begin to think the beard of a Comet, or the tail of a Meteor, to speak as fully the evil of sin as Scripture, and all those mouths which the spear and nails made in our Savior's body: and to tempt men, having been often abused by the false fears they give them, to out-face and despise the true, and so to grow (like Iron often heated and quench'd) churlish and unmalleable by the hammer of the Divine threatenings: Besides, these cryptick Signs give men to think that God gives them warning, but that he is very loath they should take it; that He gives them an Interpreter of his

Counsels, but so obscure, *ut interpretes egeat* interpretate (as *Cotta* in *Tully* said of the Oracle of *Apollo*;) that He is willing to speak to them by his Signs, but very shy of being understood; and that He is so severe as to be always levelling his arrows at them, but at the same time so kind as to bid men beware of him, and stand out of his way; which are the filliest sort of blasphemies that we can dishonor infinite Goodness and Wisdom by.

3. If men be such children in understanding as it is pretended, the greater reason to instruct them in the solid foundations of Religion, that so they may out-grow their childish state, and be Christians not upon Ethnick but Scripture-principles. To say the People are not capable of Reasons, and therefore must be governed by Fallacies, is to make one misery an apology for another. This hath been the great Error of most Times, that because men saw the people to be weak and easie, therefore they chose to instruct them to Piety by Pictures, Rites, fantastical Fears, Legends, pathetical Orations, odious or fashionable phrases, tones and gestures; all which made them worse fools then they found them, giving them furious Zeals, ungovernable Spirits, statulent Religions, talkative tempers, giddy and unsetled heads. The World can never out-grow

grow the dwarfish stature of its more childish years in point of Knowledg, while the Learned are taught nothing but Faith, and the People nothing but Affection. The real principles of Religion are rational, and offer themselves (like the beams of Heaven) to the weakest Eye that is but a little open to view them; and where these dwell they produce an understanding, an abiding and an equal piety; they do not (like a Prodigy) fright a man, but reform him: and besides, are the truths of God, and so, the onely natural instruments to build up Goodness with: whereas Prodigies are lies, *often* in themselves, *always* in their supposed ends; and it is ignoble to put a fallacy upon any man, and to cheat him, though it be into Truth or Virtue.

But (secondly,) This Undertaking stands impleaded as the encouragement of practical Atheism. Bad men may sleep on now, and take their rest; for they are so used to the noise of the divine Threatnings that they *cannot* awaken them, and they are told that Prodigies *must not*. And besides, the detection of these false fears in Religion may possibly give them a suspicion of the true, and a persuasion that all religious fears hold more of the softness of the person, then the value of the occasion. And therefore the interest of piety had been more consulted,

2 *Prejud.*

if the truth contended for had been still reserved as a *Cabbal* amongst men secured by true virtue and wisdom from an evil use thereof.

1 Act. 17. 22.

I answer; If Superstition must not be removed for fear Atheism take its place, certainly that speech of the Apostle, *Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious*, had a zeal therein, but not according to knowledge; and the first Preachers of the Gospel amongst the superstitious *Gentiles* acted extremly against Reason of Divine State, because tempting them to Atheism while calling them off from the follies and fears of Superstition. Besides, Superstition (what ever soft thoughts men conceive thereof) is it self but a more specious and disguised Atheism; for it dishonors the God it worships; hates him it croucheth to, cloaths Him with such passions as it were a sin to imitate, and hath reverence for nothing in God but a power to do an ill turn; and therefore as good almost let the one continue as the other.

But for my part I know not to disparage my Reader so far as to imagine that he hath such a weak and crippled piety, that it would fall to the ground, if wanting the wooden crutches of Prodigies to support it; or that he will fear the dangers of the pit ever the less, because grown too much man to be frightened



frighted from it by bugbears; or that *the terrors of the Lord* will appear to him the less obliging motives of repentance because not assisted now with the fantastick fears of a Monster or a fiery Meteor: or that his true fears of God will be ever the less, but rather the more, when he may come so intire and undisturbed by the false ones to entertain the true. However, because even weak jealousies (where the interest of piety seems toucht) merit a regard, I seriously profess that I intend not in all that hath been said, to encourage men to promise themselves peace and impunity in a way that is not good, or to disparage the rational and well grounded fears in Religion: and therefore assert that as the *badgers skin died red* might be offered to God under the Law, while its body was unclean, so while the body of this superstitious observation and Opinion is too impure to be offered as an instance of our fear and observance of Him, yet the skin wherein it is wrapt [the faith of a divine Providence and Præscience, the tacit acknowledgment of our continual obnoxiousness to his displeasure, the fears of his judgments while in a course of sin] ought still to be dedicated to him: but so, as the color and complexion be altered, and all these proceed from more solid principles, and be found in conjunction with a more filial temper than in the ancient observers of Prodigies they were, CAP.

O

## CHAP. VII.

*Concerning Prodigies Penal.*

**H**AVING thus (in a method as much required to the rules of Logick, as the uncertain and doubtful color and condition of the Subject would allow) discoursed the first part of my Argument, *Prodigies barely signal*, that which the order proposed lays next before us, is the consideration of *Prodigies penal*. By which I understand *pœnarum monstra*, judgments of an unusual make and more dreadful aspect. Now these are either *Personal*, befalling some particular members of the common body, who (to use the significant language of m Num. 16. 24 m Scripture) *have not died the common death of all men, nor been visited after the visitation of all men*; or *National*, when the whole body of a Nation, or the greater part thereof, is smitten with a rod of an unusual size. These also may easily be conceived by men as a kind of hand out of the clouds to write *Tekel* upon persons or causes distastful to themselves, and therefore I shall (as I can) direct to a sober notion concerning them both in the Ensuing Conclusions.

## SECT.

## SECT. I.

*Two positive conclusions to direct the interpretation of Prodigies Penal.*

A seeming inconsistency of expressions in sacred scripture in reference to Divine judgments: these an accidental occasion of mistake in this subject. Judgments extraordinary no conclusive arguments of the Extraordinary sinfulness of Persons. Men prone to think them so. The Jewish notion in reference to them, what. Why so commonly thought the evidences of a great guilt. Scripture and Experience alledged to correct that mistake. The Original of Heroick poetry. Why no certain rules here observed in the distribution of punishments. What affections great judgments upon our neighbors are to be entertained with. Judgments extraordinary no signs of the sinfulness of Causes Civil or Sacred, proved by six considerations. A conjecture concerning the true occasion of that Apostolical punishment, Delivering to Satan. The true ground of mistake in this argument discovered, and reprov'd.

**S**cripture when speaking concerning the Divine judgments, seems to deliver *רַבְרִי סוֹתְרִין וְהָאֵת* (as some of the Masters say of those verses in the *Prov. 26. 4. 5* verbs) words that overthrow one another: sometimes blaming men for *not understanding the meaning of them*, sometimes for venturing to interpret them, sometimes for *a Curious looking down into those great depths and elsewhere for a careless looking off*. It tells us in one place, *God is known by the judgment which he executeth*; in another, that *neither love or hatred is known*

known by all that is before us. Which diversity of expressions hath been an accidental occasion of some confusion of thoughts in reference to the Divine judgments: for a remedy whereof, the first Conclusion I propose is this.

Conclus. 1.

*Judgments extraordinary are not without further evidence concluding arguments of the more then ordinary sinfulness of Persons.* Men are generally prone to find their own virtues in *Fortuna blanditiis* (to weigh their own merits at the deceitful beam of outward blessings and successes) and their brothers faults in *Parcarum tabulis*, the sad destinies and evils which fall

w Job. 2. 13.

upon his lot. w *Job's* friends judged the dimensions of his iniquities by the shadow of the sufferings which were laid upon him,

x 1 Sam. 16. 8.

y Act. 28. 4.

z *Quam chara Diis immortalibus esset*

Gens Judæ-

rum docuit

quod est victa,

quod elocata,

quod servata

rotes. Orat. z

pro Flacco.

a Οὐδεις, ἡ-

εγγυω θεῶς ἀ-

ντιός ἐστι.

Artemid. l. 2.

Oneiroc. c. 8.

Casab. in Pers.

sat. 2.

and presumed the former great because the latter were so. x *Shimei* concluded *David*

to be a *man of blood*, because *evil was raised up to him out of his own house*. The

y *Barbarians* that the Apostle was deeply indebted to the divine Justice, because his hand was arrested by the Viper. Thus the

z *Orator* vainly inferred that God had no great love for his children of old the Jewish Na-

tion, because he severely corrected them so often. And as a generally among the Hea-

thens of old, if a person was smitten by

lightning, he was thought (like the sacrifice

con-

consumed by a divine fire) more sacred and venerable ; so on the contrary, Christians look at him as prophaned to the Opinion of men, and conceive his crimes as black as his smitten body, and that God judged him good for nothing but to make an example of to the rest of men. Thus also if the *fire of God* fall and consume their Neighbors dwelling, if he break his neck by a fall from his horse, if he fill not up the number of his daies nor be gathered to his grave in peace, many are apt to hasten to a rash sentence, and to write in his ashes *Forfaken of God*. And it seems to have been the common maxim of the *Jews* in our Saviours time, that there were no chastisements of love, but that all afflictions were the expresses of displeasure, and the constant indications of some correspondent, though hidden, guilt in the suffering person. In confidence whereof the Disciples demanded of our Savior <sup>b</sup> *who had sinned, that man, or b* *his parents, who was born blind?* and supposed that those persons to whom the *Tower of Siloam* became both monument and executioner were Sinners above all that dwelt in *Jerusalem*. And perhaps therefore was Christs coming down from the cross, so often and so <sup>d</sup> universally demanded by the *Jews* as the Sign of his being the *Son of God* ; because of of this fond conceit, that a death of such shame

Jo. 9. 2. 3.

Luk. 13. 40.

Mat. 27. 40.  
41. 42. 43.



shame and pain could not possibly befall a person of that sanctity, and favor with God, which his Son must needs be supposed to have: that which also made the cross of Christ such an offence both to Jew and Gentile for so many years. Suitably to this

*e si vel spinā  
homo manum  
suam la-  
dat, quod sta-  
tim iterum  
extrahat, pœ-  
na loco id ipsi  
inflictum esse  
censendum sit,  
&c. Mor. Ne-  
voc. P. 3. 17.*

Jewish notion *Maimonides* tells us, that not the least evil befalls a man, but is an instance of Divine displeasure, and that if he hurt but his hand with a thorn which he presently pulls out again, he is to regard it as a divine punishment; and on the contrary, if the least good befall him, it is to be owned a retribution and part of payment for his service. And therefore perhaps is the Apo-

*f Heb. 12. from  
vers. 1, to 13.*

stle, when writing to the *f Hebrews* so large to shew that the principle of their afflictions was love and the end was peace and righteousness. Least their common notion of them [that their Original was wrath and their end only punishment] should make their burdens more galling and uneasy.

Now the reason why Men under any heavy pressures, have suffered almost as much from the hard thoughts of man, as the hand of God, and been thought as wicked as miserable, is, because we frame to our selves a peevishly notion of good and evil; we are apt to over-ate our bodies and Estates, and then to estimate the favor of God by the references and respects his Providences

vidences bear towards them. Besides, we conclude that all punishments extraordinary must be the undoubted reporters of a correspondent guilt, because the great Canon of Justice is this, that all punishments be adjusted to the merits of the Person.

Whereas Gods distributions of rewards and punishments in this life are not directed by any of our short and scanty maxims and notions. *Scripture tells us, there is one g* Ecclef. 9. 2. *Event to the righteous and to the wicked, to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not.* And that *h* *there are just men to whom it hapneth according to the works of the wicked, and there are wicked to whom it hapneth according to the works of the righteous:* and assures us God's servants privileged from some sin, but from no punishment; while a *Josiah* may fall in a battel, *Uzzah* be smitten for an error of love and zeal, and a daughter of *Abraham* be bound by *Satan*, a *Job* delivered to the power of the *Devil* both in body and Estate, and fire came out of the bramble and devoured the Cedar. But had Scripture been wholly silent in this Argument, the History of times, nay the experience of a day would have shewn us this knowledg, that this world is not intended the place of distinction between the good and bad: they shew us the *Ax* laid as often to the green tree as to the dry,

\* *Inter alia dicebat Rex sperare, nihil se facturum esse deinceps quo Deum offendat: iis pronuntiatis verbis, & vestigio concidit, amissa loquendi facultate, &c. De bello Neap. l. 5. m. p. 659.*

dry, and men surprized by some heavy plague in the midst of pious as well as prophane purposes. \* *Cominans* relates of *Charles* the eighth of *France*, that in discourse one day with his Queen and other persons of quality, among other things, He said that *He hoped that he should do nothing hereafter whereby he should offend God*: and that immediately upon the uttering of those words he fell down, became Speechless, and died within few hours after in the place where he fell; (as many other have done in an apoplectick fit.)

i *Eccles. 7. 7.*

This was it which gave occasion to some men of old to reproach Divine Providence under the terms of *Fate* and blind *Fortune*, even the non-observance of any steady laws which directed the rewards and punishments which they saw before them; and oft filled the minds even of wise men with wild and impatient thoughts. i *Surely oppression of innocence by the hand of wickedness maketh a wise man mad*; it offered such violence to his notions of fit and just. This was it which gave birth to Heroick Poësie: for when the Souls of men had been long grieved to hear the groans of depressed vertue and the loud laughers of exalted folly, and to see successes so seldom measured by the merits of the cause or person; they began to set up the pretty images of some more fortunate

*fortunate Islands* wherein Vertue reigned and the rod was laid only on the back of Folly, and they eased their thoughts by retiring sometimes but to the contemplation of this imaginary uniformity between merit and success.

God will have things carried thus in a way quite counter to our Maxims and notions, that so the world may have a standing argument to confirm the faith of some other day wherein the cause of vertue shall have a fairer hearing then now it hath; or perhaps that these *δυσνόητα*, matters scarce accountable to our reason (in providence) may be the constant exercise of our faith and wisdom. For look as in some *Prodigies signal*, things seem so delivered to the powers and forces of secondary Agents, that the world appears but a kind of great Engine moved solely by certain weights and springs within it self, and all effects resolvable into bare and single *Nature*; so in *Prodigies penal*, Gods Arrows seem so to fly by dark, and heavy plagues to fall with so little choice and distinction, that the world seems a great lottery, *and time and chance to happen to all events and persons.* God intending this cryptick management of affairs, as a kind of Divine tentation, to prove whether we be such men in understanding as to stand by the doctrine of a Providence, while the neces-

4 Ezck. 1.8.

sity and wisdom thereof are rendred so much to dispute by the great appearances of Nature and Fortune; and whether we be quick sighted enough to discover that the *living creatures* have the *hands of a man*, though half hidden under the covert of *their wings*, that all causes and events are managed by a hand of Wisdom and reason, though they may seem to fly at random, to our first and more unwary thoughts.

Excellent therefore the advice of *Salomon*, who having told us that *there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and a wicked man who prolongeth his life in his wickedness*, thus directs in the following words, *Be not righteous over-much*, i. e. Do not in thy fond thoughts acquit thy self more righteous then the person upon whom thou feest such a judgment fall; *neither make thy self over-wise*, by arrogating an understanding sufficient to expound this riddle of Providence, *Gods dealing out such hard meares to such a person*: we are to *judg nothing before the time*. If it be but *weighings and weighings* (in the phrase of the *Apostle*) such a tryal as some man hath undergone, and any may, let us not by any censorious speeches poyson our brother's wounds, which call for the oyl of our comforts and prayers. A person may (like the *Leper* under the Law) be smitten with a very *black and dark plague* and

1 Eccles. 7.15.

m 1 Cor. 4.5.

n 1 Cor. 10.13

o Lev. 13.6.



and yet be pronounc'd clean before men; God often puts that mettall into the hottest fire which he intends shall bear his own image in most lively figures. When therefore we read of *Antioch* (where the Disciples were first called Christians) and the Churches of the *Colossians* and *Laodicea* (to which the Holy Ghost directeth particular letters by the hands of *S. Paul*, and *S. John*) their perishing by an Earthquake, of God's forsaking the *Levantine Churches*, of the Seas sudden breaking of its sandy girdle, and overwhelming Cities or Countreys, of the many thousands which perished upon the second terrible eruption of fire from mount *Vesuvius*, or the like judgments great enough for an *Epocha*: We ought not to afflict their miseries, by charging a greater guilt upon their persons and memories then on other men; but rather (with the Apostle) *Stand and behold the severity of God upon them which fell*, and adore his Goodness to us who are not thus surpris'd in our wickedness, or visited with some strange affliction which might make us infamous as well as miserable, and incourage uncharitable men to clap Job. 27. 23. *their hands at us, and to hiss us out of our places.* Anno 1631.

Secondly, *No such extraordinary judgments* Conclus. 2. *(in destitution of any other evidence) are to be received as conclusive arguments of the*  
A a 2 sin.

*sinfulness of causes, civil or sacred.* Doctrines and causes change color and appearance in the eye of the multitude, according as heaven shines more or less upon them by successes. Our <sup>9</sup> histories make mention of a very hot contest about the marriage of Priests, whether were more acceptable with God, they which vowed single life, or they which were married. At last the Contenders agree to remit the controversy to the debate of a Synod, where they which asserted the marriage of Priests, placed themselves on one side of the room, and they which appeared against it, on the other: and so it happened that the side of the house, whereon the defendants of the marriage of Clergy-men sat, fell down, and many of them were hurt, and many lost their lives. Which accident was construed Gods determination in the dispute, and received as a sign that he was better pleased with those which vowed single life: and the arguments of their adversaries were hereby, long after knock'd at head, as well as themselves.

<sup>1</sup> *Baronius* (to infer the piety of that payment) takes notice that the Church of *England* was overspread with schisms and heresies, *simul ac denarium Petri solvere desierunt*, as soon as ever the people left off to pay Peter-pence. And thus the Armies lately on foot amongst us, used to quote the

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Fuller's  
Church Hist.  
l. 2. p. 133.

<sup>1</sup> In Annal.  
circa an. 740

the *signal Victories* (as they loved to speak) in their vindication, and to tell the world that God had given judgment against the adverse cause when they had made appeal to him in *the high places of the field*: and so (in effect) told us that *just* and *unjust* were but more handsom terms for prosperous and unsuccessful; and that Treason (like bells) when once at full height, ceaseth to make any noise in the ears of Justice. And of late, if any distemper incident to humanity, have befallen persons in attendance on the publick Service, it hath been rashly urged as a caveat from heaven against the very prayers. And thus (in common life) where men are at variance, and see the *rod of God* lying upon the back of their adversaries, they are ready to say, *God hath espoused their cause and avenged their quarrel*; and so, to kill their brother with Gods sword, and make him a party in all their petty quarrels and animosities.

Against all such unclean proofs, which (like the Crab) go backward, from events to rules, I offer these considerations,

I. *God often blasts the cause of truth and goodness by adverse Providences.* For as God in his word, hath recorded some actions of very eminent persons [as the equivocating of *Abraham* with *Abimelech*, *Rachel* her defeating of *Laban* with a falsehood, the incest

*s Orig. Contr.  
Gels. l. 4. p. 124*

of Lot with his daughters, some actions of Samson, &c.] not noted (like the Jewish Sepulchers) with any visible sign, of reproof and dislike, that so men might not unwittingly defile themselves by copying out the example (in which he doth but prove our constancy to his even and undoubted precepts, and try whether we have understanding to put a difference between the bright and darker side of that cloud of witnesses we are to eye in our way to heaven;) so also in his providence there are *tentationes divinae*; the cloud often rests upon the *tabernacles of the righteous*, the fire of heaven sometimes strikes a religious house, the chief witnesses of truth shall be forced to know themselves by the title of *victus Dei populus*. God hereby makes tryal whether we will believe the Spirit of the living creatures to move in the wheels, whiles they describe such involved and perplex circles and motions; whether we love truth and vertue, or rather their fortunes and felicities. Besides, the divine relation and light of righteousness and truth, never make such clear reports of themselves, as when they break out and shine forth at last, through all the clouds of persecution and heresies, God often permits them for a time to be obscured withal.

2. *Prodigious evils upon its Adversaries,*

is a plea which almost any cause is able to enter for it self at one time or other. The Israelites fell twice before the Benjamites though engaged in a war (seldom unprosperous) intended only as a publick revenge. <sup>† Judg. 20. 10.</sup> We find the <sup>u</sup> Heathens often mentioning <sup>u Vid. Val. Max. Cap. de Contempt. Relig. w Herodot. l. 8 c. 37.</sup> the judgments which befell the despisers of the Gods and religion among them. And <sup>w</sup> Herodotus tells us that several Barbarians (as he stiles them) adventuring to rush rudely upon the Temple of *Minerva*, had the irreligion of the attempt avenged upon them by a fire from heaven. An event to which I incline to intitle the especial agency of the Devil (amongst whose stranger works, the causing of fire to come down from heaven, is particularly instanced in, *Revel. 13. 13.*) to maintain thereby a reverence in the minds of men to his altars and rites, and perhaps to imitate the fire which came forth from God, under the old Law, to avenge the irreverend and unhallowed approaches to his altars; or which fell from heaven to chastise the rude and violent addresses of the captains and their fifties to a *Man of God*. And <sup>x</sup> *Justin* relates that *Brennus* the Leader of the *Galls*, attempting to rife the Delphick Temple, was by some rallied forces of his defeated enemy, quite vanquished, and those of his wounded army which survived the battel were killed with hail and light-

<sup>x</sup> Insecuta deinde tempestas est qua grandine & fulgure saucios ex vulncribus absumpsit. Dux ipse Brennus cum dolorem vulnerum ferre non posset, pugione vitam finivit, *Just. Hist. l. 24.*



y Orig. cont.  
Cels. l. 8. p. 407

ning, and that himself impatient of the anguish of his wounds, to cure one wound with another stabbed himself with his own dagger. And y Celsus in Origen thus endeavours the vindication of his Cause, π-  
σοι, δι' αὐτῶν τοῖς ἱεροῖς ὑβρίσαντες αὐτίκα ἐά-  
λωσαν, οἱ μὲν ἐκφρονες, &c. how many (saith  
he) upon the contempt and violation of holy  
things, have been immediatly punished? some  
have run distracted, some have been forced  
to publish their own wickedness, some have  
laid violent hands upon themselves, some  
have been taken with incurable diseases, &c.  
which relation is not unlikely, because the

z lib. 3. p. 132.

same Father z elsewhere tells us that the E-  
gyptians and other Heathens had their δαίμ-  
νας βασανίζοντας τὰς δοκούντας πᾶσα ἐλευθε-  
ρία καὶ τῷ τυχόντων βωμμάτων, &c. Demons  
which tortured those which seemed but a lit-  
tle to transgress in the observation of their Su-  
perstitions, as in the eating of some forbid-  
den meats, in touching the dead body of a  
man; and the like: and that they used to  
do honor to them, ἐν τοῖς τοῖς, in some  
places peculiarly separated to them: and to  
which they used to deliver the offending  
person. And this Ethnick usage was (I con-  
ceive) the occasion of that Apostolical  
punishment among the Gentiles, of a deli-  
vering to Satan eis ἑλεεινὸν τῆς σαρκὸς, for  
the temporary torture of the flesh, in the  
case

z 1 Cor. 5. 5.

1 Tim. 1. 20.

case of open contempt of holy things ; this being a punishment which the Heathens (to whose Rites the<sup>b</sup> Apostle sometimes con- <sup>b 1 Cor. 9. 21;</sup> formed ) no doubt , well understood and <sup>22.</sup> greatly dreaded, and which look'd so perfectly like the delivery of the offender to all the Evils of his former Gentile state. But to return : These few Examples assure us, that we consult not the interest of Truth, when we endeavor to serve it upon such proofs as Error may alledg, as well as that. Extraordinary Judgments may in some cases be alledg, to second and credit a Rule, but never to create it.

3. *God hath supplied us with more even and steady Rules to estimate the streightness or crookedness of any Cause by, then Prodigies Penal,* which an active Fancy may easily tune to the air of any Opinion and practice whatsoever. We have the Oracles of God, the Councils of wise and good men, the common Principles which manage the Discourses of the World, the Laws of a State, and our own exercised Reason, which is (in the language of *Plutarch*) τ ἀληθείας νεῖωσ, the great *Oracle of Truth* to resolve us in the emergent doubts of life. And it is especially because men are under a quick sense, how exact an Eye is requisite to discern how nearly any of these Rules touch the building, any Cause or Doctrine of whose evenness there

there may be a doubt, and that this method of knowledg ingageth them to *dig for understanding*, and requires them to an industrious use of themselves in the acquist of true resolutions in a case, and perhaps may detain them some time but in the place of Candidates and Probationers for Truth, that they are so easily inclined to attend to the supposed intimations of a *Revelation*, some *strange Prodigy*, *Prophecy*, or *mighty impulse*, which give them the conclusion without tasking them to a tedious consideration of the value of the premises, and lift them up into the *Tree of Knowledg*, without any industrious climbing of their own. But certainly God, who bad us *buy the Truth*, never intended it should be got upon such cheap and easie terms: men may suspect their wares to be nought, if they cost no more then an idle attendance to such fantastical measures as these generally are.

4. *Neither Scripture nor Reason warrant us to receive God's Judgments as his determinations in any sacred or civil differences.* We have now no more warrant to infer the goodness or badness of the Causes and Opinions men espouse, onely from the Judgments which sometimes overtake the Assertors of them, then to make judgment of the loyalty of a Wife by a *water of jealousy*. It is onely because we commonly set too high

high a price upon our Causes parties and opinions, that we so easily imagine the biggest End God's Judgments can be directed to, is the bearing witness to the truth and righteousness of them. By which Fancy we become a kind of spiritual *Anthropomorphites*, shaping out God like our selves, and laying out the Counsels of Heaven by the poor, short, and often peevish, thoughts and models of a man. If we consult Scripture we shall seldom or never find a person onely of a corrupt Judgment in reference to some Doctrine of Religion (if otherwise of a blameless life) smitten with any great plague from Heaven, but often persons of corrupt and depraved maners: because all the laws of righteousness carry οἰκτιρον ελεγον, a demonstration within themselves, and stand in so full a light, that (like the Sun-beams) they bear testimony to themselves: whereas matters of Faith and Doctrine appear not before the mind in so great an evidence. Men indeed are apt to follow a little difference of Opinion from themselves (in Religion especially) with thick *Anathema's*, and quickly to blow it out into a Schism or Heresie (because such differences seem to dispute the strength of their Arguments,) but are easily inclined to look upon even a great miscarriage in life, through the other end of the Prospective, and to shrink it to an

επιλογη,

ἡττιμα, a bare humane infirmity, (God's honor onely being concerned in that :) Whereas, on the other side, Divine Goodness makes a large allowance for a wel-meant Error, because the Understanding, like the Eye, cannot so easily see its own blemishes, but is severe against even a little crime, men being more enabled for a discovery of that.

To say therefore, that dying *Arius* (who in the maner of his death seem'd the Antitype of *Judas*, his bowels gushing out when he went to serve the necessities of Nature) proclaimed the displeasure of God against his Doctrine; or that that House in *Black-Friers*, which sunk down under the weight of those many Papists there assembled with their Priest to attend the offices of their Religion, and buried them in its ruines *Octob. 26. 1623.* was God's warning against Popery: or that the Births (though granted monstrous beyond the possibilities of Nature) which <sup>d</sup> *M<sup>rs</sup> Hutchinson* and *M<sup>rs</sup> Dyer* (the two great Prophetesses and Leaders to the Anabaptistical Faction in *New-England*) were delivered of, singled out their Opinion, and were visible Reproofs from Heaven of *Anabaptism* it self, is to interpret the voice of Gods Rods by blind & uncertain guesSES, and to repeat the vanity of that Emperor who would fetter the Sea; for we hereby determine the large and deep thoughts of infinite

c See the story at large in Dr. Gouge his *Treat. of the Extent of Divine Provid.*

d See the History of the *Familists* of N.E. by T. Weld.



infinite Wisdom by those little maxims, short thoughts and ends, our selves usually attend unto. God never menaced any such reproachful Judgment against any such Errors as these in Scripture; and if he had, if found in conjunction with great crimes, it may be more reasonably presumed that it was directed rather against the wickedness of the heart than the weakness of the head.

If I would advise with my Eyes in the choice of my Party or Opinion, I should rather observe (as I could) what parties of men are most delivered to the judgment of a cruel and unquiet spirit, to a giddy motion from one fond notion to another, who they are which seem most forsaken of virtue and true goodness: For these are spiritual judgments, and so more suitable to the condition of that spiritual Oeconomy the appearance of our Savior hath now put us under. Besides, the Spirit of truth may (nay, <sup>e</sup> usually doth) dwell with great sufferings, but great sins give suspicion of its departure. But even this also, upon trial, will approve it self but the best of bad Rules to proceed by in the judgment of Causes: for the enormity of mens lives (like dirty hands) may soil and blemish the jewel of a good Cause, not lessen and sink its intrinsic worth and value; and indifferent men will be ready to conclude it a falling Cause which catcheth

catcheth at such weak and unfaithful holds. A good Cause, like a Soldier not well appointed, receives more hurt from the reggs of its own rotten armor, then the bullet of an Adversary; is more disparaged (I mean) by a weak and insufficient Defence, then a strong and subtil Argument, (which is often thought to hold more of the pregnancy of the Disputant then the Cause.)

f Pla. 36.6.

5. *God's* <sup>f</sup> *Judgments* are a great deep: the line of humane wisdom is too short to sound the Ends and Reasons of them: *Ἐὰν τί τὰ κακά*, why are some particular Evils, is often as desperate an inquiry among wise Christians, as *πόθεν τὰ κακά*, whence are Evils, was among the Ancient Heathens. In the Works of Creation, we better apprehend the final then the formal Cause of things; but in the Works of Providence, better the formal then the final, [what and whence the Evils are, then why:] and therefore some of the Ancients defined Providence (though under another name) *motus ab occulto in occultum*, a motion from an hidden Agent to an hidden End. Sometimes perhaps the Person shall fall in the Cause, because that is displeasing to God; thus *Josiah* fell in the Expedition against the King of *Egypt*: sometimes the Cause may fall in the Person, because he is displeasing to God; as the *Israelites* in the Controversie with the Men

Men of *Benjamin*: sometimes neither Cause nor Person are offensive to him, but perhaps his *hour* for its prevalency *is not yet come*; or perhaps he intends to succeed it by some means more proper to serve his honor and the happiness of his servants upon, then any they have yet thought of. The Ends of the Divine Judgments being thus various and unsearchable, they cannot be preferred Rules of trial in any sacred or civil differences, but must be alway thought and discours'd of with all severity and devout caution. It's a Maxim at *Rome*, *Fura Pontificum Romanorum sunt reverenter glossanda*, no bold and hasty Comment must be put upon the Text of the Papal Laws. Certainly it is an instance both of wisdom and piety to gloss upon all acts of Divine Providence with all fear and reverence, which turn upon such dark and mysterious Counsels; And the rather because,

6. *The trial of Causes by the Rule of outward Blessings or Evils, hath betrayed Men to very vain imaginations.* The <sup>§ Jer. 44. 17, 18.</sup> Idolaters in the Prophet concluded their burning Incense to the *Queen of Heaven* was very grateful to the King thereof, because *then they had plenty of victuals, were well and saw no evil*; but while they neglected so to do, *they wanted all things, had been consumed by the sword and by the famine.* And it seems

<sup>h</sup> Maimonid.  
Mor. Nevoc.  
P. 3. c. 37.

seems it was the usage of the great Masters of Superstition of old, to build their Cause by such kind of Arguments: For that learned <sup>h</sup> Rabbi tells us, *The Patrons of those idolatrous Customs, which have neither foundation nor profit, to confirm their Superstitions, and to conciliate credit to them, cunningly use this craft, to tell the people that all they which did not do this or that action which confirmed their Superstition, should always be smitten with such or such a plague. Quod si vero plaga illa per accidens alicui forte subsequatur, &c. And if that threatned plague chance to follow upon any man which neglects such a superstitious practice, then that Superstition is magnified, and the Opinion presently subscribed unto.* Thus, He tells us, the Idolatrous usage of waving their new-born Children through the flames, arose from an Observation among the Heathen that some quickly died that had not been so made to pass through the fire. And an Observation that some Evils had befallen them on such a day oftner then on some other, gave men of old to imagine some days inauspicious, and not to share so much in God's favor as others did. In like maner, all those fearful plagues wherewith God punish'd the obstinate Idolatry of the *Roman* Empire, were concluded the Examples of divine displeasure against the Christians, and they were always presumed

turned the *Fonars* which raised all the storms  
in the State: A common Opinion, the re-  
prehension whereof was a great occasion of  
St. Austin his Book *De Civit Dei*. An over-  
value of this crooked Rule drew forth that  
Speech from a Modern Papist: *The Greeks*  
(saith he) excommunicated us, and account-  
ed us for Hereticks about the year 1053, and  
after four hundred years (viz. An. 1453.)  
Constantinople was taken: now this number  
is given to the expiation and remission of  
sins: So that we may know (saith he) there-  
fore the Grecians were delivered by God in  
vassalage to the Turks, because they had not  
expiated that crime committed against the  
Catholick Church within the time appointed  
by the sacred Scripture. To all these Ex-  
amples, I shall superadd but this one more:  
*Comenius* tells us, that he could not obtain  
of himself to publish that Book of Prophe-  
cies intituled *Lux in tenebris*, till God had  
chastised his backwardness by afflictions,  
and that he saw those who derided or hin-  
dred its publication punish'd with death. But  
when contrary Events had refuted them, he  
seems to retract their hasty publication with-  
in a few lines, saying, *Videmur sane obsequi*  
*præcipitantia peccasse.*

i Boz. Eugub.  
de Sign. Ec-  
clesiae. Lib. 6.  
c. 2.  
k Ut sciamus  
ideo Græcos  
in servitutem  
divinitus  
Turcis datos,  
quòd crimen  
adversus Ec-  
clesiæ cathol.  
paratum non  
expiarint in-  
tra definitum  
à divinis scri-  
pturis tempus.  
  
Terrebant me  
edita iræ Dei  
exempla, eorū  
nempe qui opus  
hoc blasphemantes aut  
impedientes,  
aut promo-  
vere jussi non  
promoventes,  
morte multati  
sunt. Hist.  
Revelat. edit.  
1659. in præ-  
fat.

All these Considerations assure us, that  
Men are never in greater danger of lying a-  
gainst the Truth, and God the Father there-



of, then when they make to themselves such measures thereof as he never sealed; and prefer his Providences to the Opinion of more fit standards of right and wrong than his Precepts, and the commands of his Vicegerents: It were therefore heartily to be wish'd, that men had that largeness of heart, as not to think Heaven and Earth concerned in the standing or falling of their little Interests, Forms and Opinions; that they would leave off (that worst kind of inclosure) the intailing Salvation sely upon their own party, and not go about to hodge in the Holy Dove, by appropriating the graces and influences thereof to themselves. For then they would not be so prone to believe God's Judgments design no higher than the service of their sorry passions, parties and persuasions; that He is as angry as they are when discountenanc'd, and as little able to forbear and make allowance for the supposed mistakes and infirmities of men as themselves.

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SECT. II.

Four positive Conclusions more about Judgments Extraordinary.

Judgments in what cases singularly observable. God often seems to punish men in the way they sinned, and why. Four instances of God's Extraordinary Judgments upon the Adversaries of his Gospel. Most of the Gentile Temples destroyed by fire. The singularity of God's Judgments upon the Jewish Nation, noted. The Example of the Galileans considered: their extraordinary death, no sign of the time to that Age. Lesser National Judgments, how to be valued. Religious Controversies to be managed without bitterness.

**H**AVING thus endeavored to rectify the Errors on the left hand, in reference to Prodigies Penal, in these two Negative Conclusions, I shall endeavor next to rectify those on the right, in these four ensuing Positive: whereof the first is this;

*Judgments extraordinary overtaking Persons evidently guilty of extraordinary crimes, are to be regarded as the evidences of God's Providence, and high displeasure against those sins.* God generally commits all spiritual Judgment to his Son, and all temporal Judgment to the Magistrate (who therefore hath God's title, and is said to judge in his stead.) But sometimes (as Kings, who yet have their Vicegerents) he is pleased to sit as it were in open Judicature himself, and to correct an high and daring crime with his own

Conclus. 1.

immediate stroke: Which he doth either when the Sword of Justice is permitted to rust in its scabbard, and the Magistrate neglects to put open wickedness to shame; or when perhaps he is unable, through a want of knowledg or power to reach the criminal; or is interpretatively absent: thus in the primitive Times when the Magistrate, being Heathen, thought not any sin against the Gospel to be *fori sui*, he invested his publick Ministers with a power which reached *eis ὅλεθρον τ' ἄφρων*, to the affliction or destruction of the flesh upon daring or hopeless offenders.

1 2 Cor. 10. 6.  
1 Cor. 5. 5.

Now these Judgments Extraordinary are Vocal and Emphatical, and call for our more serious notices in three Cases especially:

1. *When the Judgment bears upon it the evident portraiture and figures of the sin.* The cross men bear (like that of our Savior) often carries the inscription of the crime in such plain and legible characters, that *he that turns may read it*. There are some herbs which bear upon them the *Signatures of Nature*, certain marks stamp'd upon them by the hand of Nature, serving as a kind of native labels, to tell us what virtues they contain, and whereby it may be known, even upon sight, to what diseases or parts of the body ill-affected they are proper and useful, because

m Vid. Crollium lib. de Natur. Signatur.

because bearing some figures or colors analogous to them : thus punishment sometimes carries the *signatures of Sin*, and proclaims by its very make and fashion, what sin it is intended to discover and cure in us : And this it doth either when there is a *τυπικὴ δὲ* a suffering in the very same ways wherein men sinned, and the cross is (as it were) shaped out of the forbidden tree whereby they offended. Thus *David's* adultery was punished in *Absalom's* incest ; *Pharaoh*, who would have all the males drown'd, was himself drown'd ; and the wickedness of *Abimelech* in slaying his seventy brethren was returned upon his own head in that strange and violent death whereby he perished. God is pleased so frequently to punish men thus, that the <sup>o</sup> Prophets often seem to foretel a Judgment rather by a rational attendance to the condition of the sin, then by a divine *afflatus*. Now God thus frequently deals out to men such measure as they dealt to him or their neighbor, because (the great end of punishment being to bear witness to righteousness) he doth hereby eminently attest the fundamental Law of all Righteousness, *That we do to others as we would they should do to us* ; which Law, Divine Justice will fulfil upon men when it is not fulfilled by them, and give them (as the *Jews* proverbially speak) *mensuram pro mensura*. In

<sup>n</sup> Judg. 9. 56.  
<sup>o</sup> 1 King. 21.  
19.  
Isai. 33. 1.  
Joel 3. 6, 7, 8.  
1 Sam. 15. 33.  
Hab. 2. 8.  
Obad. 15, 16.  
Mic. 1. 7.  
Jer. 48. 26, 27.  
Isai. 62. 6.

p Quod evi-  
dentius Dei  
judicium esse  
posuit, quam  
ut triumphum  
presumens,  
triumphus fie-  
ret, &c. & ut  
quicquid se  
facturum u-  
surparat, ipse  
pateretur?  
Salv. de Gub.  
Dei, l. 5.  
Speaking of the  
Rom. Capt.  
q Jer. 5. 19.  
14. 15.  
V. Mr. Mede's  
Serm. on Jud.  
1. 7.

All such great Examples therefore of Divine Justice, God's Rod hath a voice as well as a smart, and it becomes us to be his noice-takers, and not (with the *Philistines*, 1 Sam. 6. 9.) to nickname the most apparent hand of God a chance which hath hapned; and that we may not be thought to censure our Brother, turn charitable Atheists. Or, secondly, the judgment may proclaim the sin, when there is an *opporuna* sign, when the judgment seems the symbol of the sin, and Justice pays men in value though not in kind. Thus God threatned the *Israelites*, that as they had served strange Gods in their own Land, so should they serve strangers in a Land not their own. *Solomon* served God with a divided heart, and but half his Kingdom goes to his posterity. When we see the scandalous sinner corrected thus by his own wickedness, and made even to drink the dust of his own Idol, we should make a pious meditation on the occasion.

2. When the Judgment surprizeth the sinner *ἐν τῷ ποσὶ* in the very acting of his wickedness, and sin the off-spring destroys its parent (as it is said of the *Viper*) in the very production, When the false swearer is immediately stricken by God, and the blasphemers tongue suddenly curst into silence, and Death sent to make the Oppressor vomit up his newly stoln morsels; when *Herod* and

*Nebu-*



Nebuchadnezzar have their sin and punishment bearing an equal date; (in short) when Justice thus lays aside its leaden feet, and treads close upon the heels of the offender; God intends to learn us some great lesson in such notorious Examples; and it is a sign we are past feeling, if we can see him thus cutting off now one and then another member of our common body, without some shrinking and religious sense thereof in our selves.

3. When the Judgment is such as the general Experience of Times proves the usual consequent of such a crime. As a sudden and untimely death of Sedition, the ruine of Estates of Sacriledg, an antedated and diseased old age of riot and drunkenness, an almost general impenitency of uncleanness, a naked and exposed posterity of oppression and unrighteous gain, strange discoveries and an infamous death of blood-shed, neglect and scorn of men of a great ambition, the blasting of designs which proceed upon the violation of the Religion of National compacts, an untimely and strange death of cruel and bloody Persecutors, God's judgments are generally a great deep (the Reasons of them past our sounding) but his righteousness is sometimes as the great mountains, visible to the dullest Eye, in the Judgments wherewith he corrects those sins especially which fall most directly

q Eccles 8. 11.  
1 Tim. 5. 24.

Prov. 24. 21,  
22.

Prov. 2. 19.

Job 27. 12,  
13, 14.

u Si quis omnē  
antiquitatē  
bellorū memo-  
riam ab ulti-  
mo principio  
repetat, profe-  
cto reperiet e-  
orum qui pa-  
stas violarunt  
inducias mi-  
serissimos exi-  
tus, & civitat-  
ibus & popu-  
lis calamita-  
tissimas exti-  
tisse. Bodin, de  
Rep. l. 5. c. 6.

cross to his Government of the World.

It will become us now to own our selves  
 1111-1111-1111 God's Records to  
 register in a pious remembrance all such  
 great displays of his Justice in the World.  
 Such Extraordinary Judgments are intended  
 God's testimonies to his Providence and  
 Righteousness, and the writing of them in  
 the dust is none of the least causes of Athe-  
 ism in the World. And therefore a<sup>v</sup> learn-  
 ed Personage (not without good reason) re-  
 ports it as a great defect, that there is not  
 yet extant an *Historia Nemeseos*, a judi-  
 cious, impartial and wel-attested History of  
 the Divine Vengeance, containing the most  
 remarkable monuments of God's Justice,  
 in which it might appear how<sup>x</sup> *Evil hath*  
*strangely hunted* (as it were through many  
 turnings of affairs and mazes of life) *the*  
*violent person*, and at last *overthrew* him. A  
 dull and stupid inobservance of such Exam-  
 ples of Divine Justice (a looking at them  
 all but as the casual drops of misery falling  
 from that *common cup in the hand of God*,  
*Psal. 75. 8.* indifferently upon good and bad)  
 stands<sup>y</sup> often arraigned in Scripture as a ve-  
 ry great sin.

What hath been spoken (to prevent  
 any corruption of judgment or practice)  
 must be taken with a grain or two of  
 Salt.

I. Where

<sup>w</sup> Verul. de  
 Augm. Scient.  
 l. 2. c. 11.

\* *Psa. 140. 11.*

<sup>y</sup> *Psal. 10. 5.*  
*Isai. 26. 11.*  
*66. 24.*

*Zeph. 3. 5.*  
*Job 34. 26, 27*  
*Mic. 6. 9.*  
*-81*  
*-312*  
*ab.*

1. Where no particular sin of any blacker die appears in the life of our afflicted Brother, we must not presume from an inspection of the condition and figures of the judgment, to draw up any particular charge against him. We are not as soon as ever God writes bitter things against our neighbor (as *z Job* phraseth it) rashly to undertake to expound the particular sense and meaning of the writing; least we call that a scorpion, which God intends a rod; and that an instance of wrath, which is intended but an exercise of grace. As we are not to conclude the punishment from the Sin, saying, *Thus and thus hath such a man done and it will come home by him*, this is to prescribe time and measure to the Divine Justice; so neither may we infer the sin from the punishment intituling some great evil of sin to such a great evil of suffering. For God may give a good man his evil, as to a bad man his good things in this world. Besides, there are (though the great <sup>a</sup> Doctor of the Jews contend against them) *יְשׁוּרִין שֶׁל אֱהָבָה*, <sup>a Maimon. Mor. Nev. p. 3.</sup> *the corrections of Divine love*: Such I call <sup>c. 17.</sup> some evils upon good men (as those upon *Job*) intended not directly the punishment of some great sin, but the exercise of some eminent virtue (though I do not think that all, or the greatest part of the evils upon the lot even of good men, merit that name, but

but are properly punishments, evil of suffering inflicted by a displeased God for some evil of ~~the~~ and therefore we ought not to talk to the grief nor shame of those whom God hath wounded, by charging the guilt of some great sin presently upon them; the

*b* Jer. 9. 12, 13

*2* Cron. 21. 15

*20. 37*

*Jer. 23. 10.*

*b* Prophets indeed would sometimes point to the particular sin which was the cause of some particular judgment, but they were persons God made of his Counsel. *no* God's judgments often come forth upon errands which they to whom they are sent, may better understand then persons unconcerned. The sum of all is, we must not conclude the Sin great because the judgment is so; nor yet that the judgment shall (in this time or way) be great, because the Sin is so; but where we are as sure from Scripture (not fancy, apt to abuse us where our selves are concerned) that the sin is extraordinary, as we are from sense that the judgment is such, we may then cry out with the followers of the Lamb, Rev. 15. 4. *All Nations shall worship before thee, O Lord, for thy judgments are made manifest.*

*2.* Care must be had that no such observations be leavened with any uncharitable sentence upon our brothers final estate. A great judgment on his body, may be intended a great mercy to his soul, and perhaps the shame and misery of this life may commute for hell.

*Uzza's*

His zeal might further the salvation of his soul, while the indiscretion thereof brought a fearful destruction upon his body.

The second Conclusion to direct to a right understanding in reference to Prodiges Penak, is this: *Judgments singular and miraculous, surprising persons in defence of a cause, evidently devoted in Scripture to destruction, may be regarded as partial testimonies from heaven against it.* It is readily acknowledged that there is light enough in Scripture to distinguish doctrines and causes by, but yet where God hath been pleased by any such mighty judgments to open the eyes of men to a clearer perception of it, and to hold them in a more serious attendance thereunto, they are not to over-look it, for fear they appear to seek a sign from heaven, or to offer weak men an encouragement to wrest the darker works of Providence, (as they do the words of Scripture) to the ends of Superstition and some little interests and Opinions to which they engross the favors of Heaven.

To serve the more distinct understanding of this conclusion, I shall propose these few examples.

1. When the Jews, in the assistance of *Galat* the Emperor, assayed the restoring of their ruined Temple and so to oppose Mo-  
ses



*Socrat. Hist.* *ses to Christ*, <sup>c</sup> God miraculously determined the controversy; for the fire (which used before to come forth from him to consume the sacrifice, now) came and consumed their intended Temple and Altars, destroyed the workmen about it, and their several instruments, and the whole design was blasted by such terrible appearances of God against it, that many Jews were perswaded by that visible argument against Judaism, to entertain the faith of Christ. And about the same time was the Temple at *Delphos* quite ruined by means not much unlike, Earthquakes, thunder and lightning: though in former Ages the Devil had secured the religion of that place by <sup>d</sup> Earthquakes and thunders, when some men began to profane it by digging about his Altar and Oracle there, in hopes to find treasure.

2. That terrible fire which issued out of the ground in the second year of *Titus* (not long after the destruction of *Jerusalem* and the Jewish Temple) and laid in ashes the temples of *Jupiter Capitolinus*, *Neptune*, *Isis*, *Serapis*, the *Pantheon*, and their other devoted places, was so strange an instance, that the <sup>e</sup> *Ethnick Historian* makes this Judgment thereupon, *Malum id divinum potius quam humanum videtur fuisse*, and was (in all likelihood) regarded by the Christians of that time, as a sign that no Cause or Religion

gion (Ethnick or Jewish) should be able to stand before the Christian; and that the day foretold, wherein <sup>f</sup> God would famish all the gods of the earth; and men should worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen, was just now a dawning. And this prodigious example became the more observable afterward, & most of the Ethnick Temples and devoted places at Rome and elsewhere being ruined by some unaccountable fires or terrible Earthquakes: that which <sup>h</sup> Clem. Alexand. also takes special notice of in his Discourse with the idolatrous Gentile, who thereupon ingeniously tells him οἶδα ἐγὼ πῦρ ἐλεγκτικόν καὶ διδασκαλικόν· εἰ βῆλει πᾶσα αἰὶν τῆς ἀνοίας φωτισαμένη· οὐκ οἶδα γὰρ πῶς αὐτὴν ἐλεγκτικὴν καὶ διδασκαλικὴν ποιήσει. I know the fire to be sufficiently convictive, and sanative of Superstition. If you would but cease a little your madness, the very fire would lead you to the light.

f Zeph. 2. 11.

g Herodian.  
suæ lib. i. lib.  
fin. & Zosim.  
κατὰ τὴν πύ-  
ρῳ μὲν ἐκπε-  
σόντι & πυ-  
ρὸς, εἴτε δὲ  
ἀέρι, εἴτε  
ἐν γῆς (τὸ το-  
ῦ ἀδελφῶν) ὁ  
πῦρ πῶς ἐφ-  
λέχθη ναός.  
&c. Hist. l. 2.  
h Admonit. ad  
Gent. p. 35.

3. That almost constant succession of Roman Emperours, whose robes (for the space of three hundred years) were dyed in their own blood shed by the hand of violence, seems an *instantia monadica* in Providence, and to carry much of a miracle with it; and may be received as an argument of Gods controversy with them for the butchering of so many of his innocent sheep, under their bloody government: (though perhaps

i Postquam  
Imp. Rom. co-  
perunt de in-  
dustria, Chri-  
stianos abster-  
rere à Chri-  
sto, nunquam  
illis bene fuit,  
aut pauci eorū  
aut nullus so-  
rè sic à morte  
descendit ad  
Generum Ce-  
reris. Camero.  
de verb. Dei.  
p. 444.

perhaps some will entertain the example but with common thoughts, because of the circumstances the Empire was then in.)

4. There is no Nation under heaven whose sins God hath visited upon them with a judgment of so private and reserved a condition, as that of the Jews, whether respect be had, to the nature or season thereof.

1. There is a singularity therein in regard of the nature of it. *Few* is become throughout the whole world, rather a name of hatred then of a Nation. They are now as much scattered over the World, as before impal'd and distinguished from it. \* They alone live in banishment, wheresoever they come. Now their becoming thus, like *Cain vagabonds and fugitives upon earth*, (which no Nation besides is) speaks them like him gone out of Gods presence, and guilty of some horrible murder, even no less then that of the *Lord of life*, which the Scripture chargeth upon them.

2. There is a singularity in the judgment upon them, in regard of the *Season* thereof. For before they had stained their hands in the blood of the Lord of the Temple, their Temple (though sometimes defaced) was never made vile and contemptible by any abomination of the heathen, set up in the most Holy. *No war, no sedition, no ca-*

ptivity

κ Ποῖον ἔθνος  
πρὸς αὐτὸν  
ἀπὸ τῆς ἰδίας  
μὴ ἐπὶ πλεως,  
καὶ τὸ οὐκ εἶναι  
σὺν τῇ πα-  
τρίᾳ θρησκείᾳ  
ἢ μόνοι ἐν-  
δαυνοῖ; Orig.  
cont. Cels. l. 2.  
ἰοῦ ἑαυτοῦ,  
πᾶσι μὲν, καὶ  
ἀλλοῖς, καὶ παρ-  
αλλήλοις, καὶ ἀλλο-  
τρίων ἐν δὲν  
ἐκείνῳ τέλει  
πότε ἔσται αἰς  
τὸ ἑαυτὸν ἀν-  
ταρμα, ἢ ἐξο-  
προν, ἢ τὴν  
ῥητορικὴν  
ἐν τῇ  
Ec. Phil. 4.  
de legat. ad  
Caium Imp.

piuity, no vastation, nor any other sad occasion whatsoever, made so great a waste upon the religion and reverence of that place, that an idol or image (against the essential sanctity thereof) should be rendered to worship therein (as Agrippa in his Embassy to Caligula the Emperor largely tells him) for that the very heathens had been tutored into a reverence thereof, and by those fearful judgments, which (as he there tells him) they had observed the King of heaven always avenging any lesser indignities offered to that his chamber of special presence; But no sooner had they committed that wonderful and horrible thing, but God delivers the place of his ancient habitation, the desire of their eyes, to the defilements and dishonor of an image that the Emperor erected in the Holy of Holies, as a sign that place should no longer be the place of his rest because it was polluted, and that he had forsaken both it and them. Moreover most constant were the judgments which at last befel the enemies of the Jewish Nation, before their great sin of rejecting the son of God. Israel was then holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase, all that dejected him did offend, evil came upon them from the Lord. Whereas afterward so constant their successes, when attempting upon them, as if to fight against that nation, were the only

m Vid. Strab. Georg. l. 16. p. 524.

n Mic. 2. 10.

o Jer. 2. 3.

p Vid. De Jace. son. Creed. l. 1. c. 19.

only way of obliging victory, and the assistance of God. Which singularity in the divine judgments, was a sign that God had now put a period to the Jewish worship, and that their putting of *Christ* to death, lookt of a blacker color in the eyes of Justice, as procuring more dreadful evils upon them then all their other sins could ever do.

I easily foresee how ready some persons may be to build hay and stubble upon this foundation, and to conclude such a cause or party branded from heaven, if any judgment (like an executioner in a vizard) frightful as well as fatal, befall the persons appearing in defence thereof. And therefore I must here mind them how inconsequent any such reasonings can be, not only because I more then doubt whether any of the judgments they can instance in, touch in any points and angles of similitude those already mentioned, and because they came not forth to decide causes collaterally, but diametrically opposed (not differences between *Paul* and *Cephus*, but *God* and *Belial*.) but because Judaism and Gentilism were causes evidently devoted in sacred Scripture, and the judgments following them were but the accomplishments of its predictions, and the executions of a Scripture sentence upon them. Besides, we are not to presume that God speaks to us more plainly by his Providence then



then by his word, wherein he hath permitted some lesser matters to stand in a very doubtful light, to ingage us to an exercise of our *Understandings* to find the truth, and of our *Charities* to those who (having not such strong and exercised senses as our selves) chance to mistake it.

3. *Personal judgments extraordinary*, are to be regarded as Gods visible sermons of repentance to a multitude under the guilt of the same or greater sin: The great Lord of Hosts, sometimes decimates a multitude of offenders, and discovers in the personal sufferings of a few what all deserve, and may (without repentance) expect: Now as the ends of brands are noted to shed forth their tears in a kind of sad sense of the loss of those parts which the fire hath already seiz'd, thus they which are (in the phrase of scripture) *as brands plucked for the present out of the fire*, should express a Christian sense of the falls and of the sins of those persons which God was pleased to make their proxies in correction. Great judgments are not to be interpreted so much the *signs* of our brothers sins, as the *reproofs* of our own. Because the pregnant example of the *Galileans* [occurring Luk. 13.] may lend a great light and strength both to the particular conclusion before us, and our general argument, it will be no undervaluing of our

pains to paraphrase a little upon our Saviors words upon the occasion.

Verf. 1. *There were present at that time, some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.*

2. *And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things?*

3. *I tell you nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

*ὁμοῦτως ἀπολείεσθαι*, which words I choose (with Grotius) to render not also or likewise, but *ad modum eundem*, after the very same manner, for I conceive our Savior doth not vary his speech verf. 5. when discoursing of those eighteen which perished by the fall of the tower of Siloam, thus, *ομοῦτως ἀπολείεσθαι*, ye shall perish, *ad modum similibus*, in a manner like them, but upon some reason of moment, which I thus explain.

These Galileans were a faction of *Judaes* of *Galilee* (of whom we read Act. 5. 37.) whose great doctrine it was, that it was unlawful to pay tribute to the *Romans*, or to acknowledge any mortal lords after God had been their King, or to offer sacrifice for the *Roman* Governors: Now Pilate (provoked by the dishonors or the dan-

q Joseph. de  
bell. Judaic.  
l. 2. c. 12.

dangers wrapt up in this doctrine) stains the Altar with the blood of these seditious sacrificers, setting upon them now come to *Jerusalem* to attend the religion of the paschal rites. And the men upon whom the Tower in *Siloam* fell, were persons standing near it, or imployed by some civil business in it, and so perished in the casual ruines thereof. Now this double personal judgment was a kind of double Map, wherein the lines and figures of that terrible calamity which afterward fell upon the whole Nation, were excellently represented: some of them perishing *ad modum eundem*, and others *ad modum similem*. For as these *Galileans* perished in the Temple, on the feast of Passover, and in a sedition varnished over with the specious colors and pretences of religion and conscience: so did a great part of the Nation afterward fall in a rebellion against *Cesar* for Gods sake. \* Pious pretences that they especially were *Abraham's children*, Gods free people, and to pay no sanctuary shekel to an Heathen Ruler. And that on the very passover day in the Temple, the time and place of Sacrifice, so that they perished *goodness*, after the very same manner that the *Galileans* did. And the persons upon whom the Tower of *Siloam* fell, were a kind of type of the many thousands besides, which perished in the ruines of the whole City (of which

*Vid. Grot. in loc.*

*Joseph. de bell. Judaic. l. 6. c. 11. & l. 7. c. 17.*

that Tower carried the image and representation) in which they were surprized, and even buried alive, by the *Roman* army; so that they did perish *opugis in a manner similar* unto them.

† In Sermon. on  
Luk. 13. 1, 2, 3.

Concerning which strange examples, I must confess, I see no reason to receive them (with the Reverend <sup>t</sup> D. Jackson) absolutely and in themselves considered, as any intended *signs of the time* to that Generation: nor do I think the Jews had any ground to think those sad accidents *τύποι σωθῆαι-  
νον ἐκείνοις* happened unto them as any true and proper *types* and figures of an analogous destruction to fall upon themselves in the revolution of a few years: for could any meer man certainly foresee, or but suspect, that any such storms and showers of evils would suddenly fall upon the Jewish state, upon the rising of this cloud *no bigger then a mans hand* (the death of a few private and inconsiderable persons?) For as a foreign Divine speaking of the English art of preaching said truly, *plus est in Artifice quam in arte*, it derives more from the Artist, then any set rules of art; so we may say upon our Savior's prophecy and foresight exprest upon this occasion, *plus fuit in significante quam in signo*: His prophetick paraphrase upon that sign, gave it that significancy and expressiveness, which of it self it had not;

not; the type speaking no more (without the divine gloss and sanction) then the smiting of any King upon the ground three times with an arrow, now, signifies that he shall smite his enemies three times, because the instance was once, by Gods appointment, an happy *Omen* of such a blessing to a <sup>u</sup> King <sup>2 King. 13. 18.</sup> of *Israel*.

But however, the *Jews* ought to have seen the sword of God in the hand of *Pilate*, in that sad example, and to have considered that while he (like the leech) drew all this blood to serve his own bloody and revengeful Nature, the great Physician intended it as medicinal to the body of the Nation, to teach them the wisdom of a speedy repentance therein, lest a like or greater judgment *should* surprize themselves: and the rather, because so guilty of the same sin [the hiding of the *sword* of sedition in the *Ephod* of religion and conscience toward God] and not seeing their fellows secured from the arrest of Judgment by the religion of an Altar, and the prerogative of a Temple. All Gods judgments upon others, Jer. 3. 2, come forth upon purposes of grace, and are intended but as the cutting and lancing of one member, to draw away the corrupt humors from the rest.

Fifthly, *Lesser national judgments are to be regarded as the signs of Gods present displeasure,* Concluf. 1.



w 2 King. 10.

32.

x Jer. 44. 11.

x 1 Joel. 1. 1.

12.

pleasure, and as his summons to repentance. Scripture makes mention of Gods <sup>w</sup> cutting of a Nation short. and his <sup>x</sup> cutting of them off: the instruments whereby he doth the former, are very intemperate seasons, murrains of cattle, Epidemical diseases, <sup>z</sup> long dearths, great defeats of Armies, &c. For as there are the vices of Men, and the vices of the Times, so there are the evils of private men, and the evils of the Times, the Judgments which seize and touch men as united and meeting in one common body and interest and under the guilt of some publick and National impiety.

4 Jer. 5. 3, 4.

II. 1. 5.

b Joel. 1. 15, 17

Now these are (I say) to be received by the common sense of a Nation, as Gods warning pieces to come in and submit themselves to him, by repentance, lest he storm them by some more black and terrible judgment, or (which is worse) <sup>a</sup> grow weary of correcting them. God sometimes deals by Nations as with persons, who are first brought to a Council, next to a Judgment, then to hell fire. The great day of destruction from the Almighty (foretold by the <sup>b</sup> Prophet) was ushered by those lesser evils, the cutting off the meat from before their eyes, the rotting of the seeds under the clods, &c. And before God laid the Ax to the root of that fair tree [the Jewish Church] he was pleased many years to chop and  
prune

prune it by those (*ἀποκαθάρσαντες*) many little and prelufory Judgments, that its unfruitfulness might be corrected. And that shower of vengeance which at last overwhelmed the *Roman Empire*, was prefaced by some smaller drops. It lay long in the fire of many heavy afflictions, but (like the clay whereby it is emblem'd *Dan. 2. 42.*) it lost nothing of its impure and drossy nature; and at last this incorrigibleness brought on its final ruine and execution by the Barbarous Nations of the North.

I say not, that these instances can warrant us alway to receive all such lesser judgments, as the tokens and harbingers of much greater, and (to borrow the language of the *d Prophet*) *as the swellings out in an high wall, whose breaking is coming suddenly:*

For God often makes great sins the triumphs of his goodness, and lays a very sad ground (in some lesser evils) when he purporeth to lay on his *c fair colors* of peace and happiness. He causeth it sometimes *f at even*

(when darker and blacker times were expected) *to become light*. Besides, the unchurching or unpeopling of a Nation (his greater judgments) are ways which under this spiritual Oeconomy, the Divine Justice seldom walks in. God, indeed heretofore, (when the world, in the greener years thereof, was most under the conduct of its

*c Nulla penitus Romani Orbis aut Romanis nominis partem, quamlibet graviter plagis caesam unquam fuisse correctam, &c. Salv. l. 5. De Gub. Dei.*

*d Isa. 30. 13.*

*e Isa. 43. 24. 54. 11. f Zech. 14. 7.*

lower faculties, and most apt to be drawn or driven by rewards or punishments temporal) singled out the Jewish Nation, in whose outward state of prosperity or adversity, to

ἡ γὰρ ἡ ἐκκλησία  
ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν  
(ἡ Ἰουδαίων)  
ἐκκλησιῶν, θεο-  
γνωσίας ἐχει-  
εργάσθαι διὰ δὲ  
ἐκδοῦν ὁ Θεός.  
Theodor.

Orat. 10. de  
Provid.

h Lam. 4. 6.

Mat. 24. 21.

i Prov. 5. 22.

k Jer. 2. 30.

Amos 4. 9.

read visible Lectures of Divinity and obedience to the Nations round about; and that the Nations might take the fairest view of their state, God tells them, *Ezek. 5.* 5, 6, 7, 8. that he had placed *Jerusalem* in the midst of the Nations round about her: and that they might call the eyes of the world the more upon them, their plagues were such as scarce admitted their parallel instances. But God chooseth now generally to punish incorrigibleness under temporal by spiritual judgments. He sometimes delivers a people (like *Samson*) to blindness and stupidity, who having been often bound by the cords of their *Dalilah* sins, would never take warning. But however we are not to presume upon *Acts of Grace*, or to think no judgment terrible but what falls upon the body. When ever therefore the smoke of Gods lesser judgments, speaks his anger to be kindled but a little, we are to express a quick sence thereof, and endeavor its quenching by a speedy removal of the fuel, those National sins which may continue and increase it. <sup>k</sup> God will account with men one day, not only for the abuse of National mercies, but National judgments.

And

And thus (by God's assistance) have I  
 issued my Meditations upon both parts of  
 the Argument, and offered the best De-  
 fence I could to the Cause I undertook (too  
 just and good to be lost upon a *Nihil dicit*.)  
 Upon a review whereof, I am not conscious  
 to my self of having trespassed against the  
 Apostolical Precept, by *returning* upon our  
 Adversaries *railing for railing*, and of gi-  
 ving any suspicion of the weakness of my  
 Cause or Arguments, by calling in <sup>m</sup> Passion  
 or Reproaches to their relief and assistance.  
 They which think an Argument pierceth  
 the less, because not managed with some  
 keenness of stile, may as well think a Razor  
 cuts the worse for having its rough and gra-  
 ting edg a little taken off. The truth is, I  
 apprehended not any such mountainous dif-  
 ficulties at any time in my way, that I should  
 need (like *Hannibal* in the *Alps*) to force a  
 passage through them with fire and vinegar,  
 any hot and tart expressions and reflexi-  
 ons.

ἡ Χρηστὴ δύσ-  
 φημίαις καὶ  
 λοιδορίαις,  
 ἐκ ἀποδεί-  
 χνυτός, ἀλλ'  
 ἰδιωτικὸν καὶ  
 ἀφιλόσοφον  
 πῶτος πεπον-  
 θῶτ' ἕρ-  
 γον ὄντι.  
 Orig. l. i. cont.  
 Cell. p. 55.

## CHAP. VIII.

*The Conclusion.*

*The Omission of a particular inquiry into the truth and consequence of some late strange Relations, excused. The undertaking proved needles, difficult, unprofitable. Relations of matters wonderful why greatly liable to suspicion. The Caution of the superstitious Heathens in receiving such stories, noted. Men most apt to be abused with such Relations, where Religion is concerned in them. The excellent manner of relating Wonders in Sacred Writ. The conviction of an Enthusiast or a Superstitious Person, why greatly difficult. Projectors almost in every Science: Why so readily attended to. The Philosophical study and truly Religious use of Prodigies commended. An acquiescence in the present Dispensations of Providence, an effectual Remedy against Curiosity.*

**I**T might possibly be expected that this Discourse should have touched more closely upon the Occasion, and have descended to a more particular Examination of both the truth and significancy of, at least, some of those strange Relations which lately have been prest upon the Faith of the Nation with so great a confidence, and so troublefom an importunity: An undertaking which I purposely declined, looking at it as *Needles, Difficult, and Unprofitable.*

First, *As in it self Needles*: For (besides that I think it hard to find a Faith that can swallow any such Camel-stories, as many of them, in all the circumstances with which they are swel'd out, appear to be) there



there are no Relations in the World, which we may with greater reason arrest upon suspicion of imposture, and which discredit themselves, then such as these are: And that,

1. Because of the ignorance of the greater part of their Attestors in Natural Philosophy. Now where men look upon Objects strange and prodigious, through so gross a *medium*, it is no trespass against Charity to believe they sometimes report them beyond their just figures and dimensions. For an ignorant man is not aware how extremely a circumstance added or omitted may vary a Relation; nor what gross fallacies the various commixtures of lights and shadows may put upon his Eyes, and tempt him to call things *that are not as though they were*, and like *Gaal* to vouch the shadows <sup>n Judg. 9.36.</sup> of the mountains an Army of men. Besides, there is a perpetual softness in the head of Ignorance, which makes it impressive to any odd conceit and relation; accordingly it was long ago noted of the multitude, that they are prone *fingere simul & credere*, to believe and to increase any strange story. And therefore the Signs God made use of were too great for *hyperbole's*, as raising the dead, cleansing the Lepers with his Word, commanding the stormy Winds into stillness, &c. Works which Ignorance might sooner

sooner lessen then increase by any romantick additions.

2. Religion seems much concerned in such Relations. Now men, like *Jacob*, will be ready to venture upon a lie for a great blessing, and such the advancement of Religion, though by false means, is conceived to be. Besides, as *Atheism* gives all Events to the second, so *Superstition* (Religion scared out of its wits) gives all soly to the first Cause, and is therefore quickly perswaded to fill out its Relations with all the Examples of Wonderful and Extraordinary, that Effects may appear the more worthy of the immediate Power of God to which it doth intitle them. Moreover, blind and ignorant fears of God make the mind impressive to any kind of Religious Legends; for never was the World more truly *Ἰσχυράτων ἐν ὁμιλίᾳ καὶ ψεύει* (as *Philo* styles it) a Region of lies and fallacies, then in the more dark and ruder Times of *Gentilism* and *Popery*, when an ignorant Devotion toward God had made Religion almost nothing but a continued History of Prodigies, Apparitions, Miracles, Voices from the Clouds, and the like: and therefore the Lord *Bacon*, advising a just History of Prodigies to direct to the true interpretation of Nature and knowledg of Causes, gives in this prudent Caveat, *Maxime habenda sunt pro suspectis*

o *Nov. Organ.*  
1.2. *Aphor.* 29.

quæ

.8.  
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*qua pendent quomocunque à Religione, ut prodigia Livii.* For Superstition (the Religion of the people) as it is said of the Viper, bites off that head, weakens and softens that faculty of Reason, by which it did at first conceive, and makes it receptive of any odd fancies and impressions; and besides we have great reason to suspect imposture in any story which is told to serve a design, but especially one so sacred as Religion is.

3. The strength of these Relations (like that of *Nisus* in the Poet) lies generally in the weak hair of some single or double testimony. Now as there is little reason to conceive a whole Nation concerned in the Visions of one or two private persons, if they were true, (Gods Signs and Wonders, which were intended as lessons to a Nation, or posterity, being generally attested by numbers;) so as little reason to hang the weight of so serious a Faith and great affections in Religion upon so slender a wire, as the testimony of one, perhaps two or three men, in such matters, is. The *Romans* of old, though as apt to swallow such prodigious stories as any, yet used to chew them first by a serious examination (sometimes made by the publick Magistrate) of the credit of the Attestors, and truth of the Relations. And we shall find in *Livy* prodigious Accidents sometimes past by without any religious

religious regards, viz. where the testimony appeared incompetent; and this, lest what was intended a devotion to their Deities, might chance to prove a mockery.

p Acts 17. 21.

4. Some men are of an *Athenian* humor, even naturally delighted to hear or tell *τις αἰνέσις*, somewhat more new and strange. The former out of a native vanity and slightheadedness of mind, whereby, like the *Camelion*, they are better pleased with airy than substantial nourishment. To gratify which vain humor, the *ancient Grecian* Historians and more Modern *Legendaries* studied onely to make their Relations miraculous enough. They saw there was in men, *errandi non necessitas tantum sed amor*, and they would be sure to fit them. The latter, either out of a mean ambition to become observable to the ruder multitude, who in all likelihood would neglect them, if their Books and Discourses were not a little turgent and extraordinary; or a natural slightheadedness of temper whereby they are not severe enough to value truth, and therefore will scarce relate any matter (especially if going a little off from common and quotidian) but it shall look big, and borrow somewhat of a Romance.

q V. Atl. Gel.  
Noc. At. de  
barbararum  
Gentium Pro-  
dig. Mirac.  
l. 9. c. 4.  
r Can. com.  
loc. l. 11. c. 6.

s Jer. 33. 32.

Very observable therefore the manner of the relation of any great Wonders in sacred Writ; wherein we shall find the most glorious

rious displays of the Divine Power delivered in that simplicity and coolness of stile, in that lax and general way, with as little of ecstasie and emotion of mind appearing in the Relator, as if some vulgar occurrence had fallen before him: that so there might not appear any symptomes of that common itch in men to tell strange stories, or any affectation of the common wonder, or a great sollicitousness to raise the esteem of that cause or party, to which they were an honorable testimony from Heaven in the minds of men.

Secondly, *Such an undertaking would have proved exceeding difficult*: It being much more easie to believe many a strange story, then to attempt its refutation, especially where the Scene thereof is laid at a great distance off; and besides, the Attestors of the Affirmative are wholly unknown to my self, and scarce any man is able to attest a Negative in such matters.

Thirdly, *The undertaking would have proved very unserviceable to my main purpose*: For,

1. My design was not the disparagement of the Persons of my Adversaries (of which any attempt upon their credit would have been indicted) but of their Cause.

2. A sollicitous inquiry into the truth of the Relations, would have been concluded a  
tacit



tacit acknowledgment of the value and significance of them, if they should chance to prove truths.

3. Having cut off the neck of this Opinion, *those precarious Principles it holds of*, a cutting off the particular heads, *monstrous Relations*, which grow upon it, would be *needless*, nay *endless*; for others would quickly rise up in their places.

4. We have (as *Tarquinius* did the heads of the taller Poppies) directly struck at the credit and significance of the most eminent and pretending Prodigies, *Comets*, *Apparitions*, *strange Sights in the Air*, *Mount Vesuvius*, and *New Stars*.

5. I conceived that more words would have been but lost upon persons, which (after all that hath been said) have a great devotion for this ancient Idol, *the Opinion of Presages by Prodigies*: of which kind, I doubt not but, should I say as much more, there would still be numbers. For *Speculative Errors* generally *scorn* the Truth, *Practical Errors* *hate* it; but it is the usage of *Superstition* and *Enthusiasm* to *fear* it: because, in the two former, *Self* onely, but in the latter *God* is presumed especially concerned: All the images and fictions of the brain (like those in the Fancies of Poets) being translated presently into Heaven, and *God's* honor and counsels thought

† Philosophi  
superstitionis  
et pene Fana-  
stici, quidvi-  
dualle viden-  
tur quam se  
esse ineptos.  
Tul. de Div.  
l. 2.

to stand or fall with them.

6. Because as for persons of more free and un-ingaged minds, and that use not to believe without asking themselves *why*, I am not without some hopes, that what hath been already discoursed in this Argument, may suffice to their resolution and satisfaction. Upon all which accounts, I did not conceive it necessary to concern my self in any solicitous Inquiries into the truth or falsehood of particular Relations; or a tedious discovery of the lightness and insignificancy of them singly and apart; and so to kill this Superstition (as they do some kind of vermin) by parts and pieces.

After all that hath been already said; before I conclude the Readers task and my own, I conceive it necessary to call him to a notice of that strong and almost catholick propension in our nature (against the reproaches even of our understanding part, and the loud voice of a great experience) to entertain, with a kind of sacred regard; persons who assume to themselves an ability to do or know hugely beyond the common standard of humane attainments: Of which kind of Mountebanks, there never wanted Examples in all Arts and Sciences. In *Astronomy*, we are detained with the vain words of some that tell us of a *Scriptura celestis*; of the Fates and Destinies of Nations and

Princes, the issues of any great Actions, written upon the scroll of Heaven, and plainly legible by the *Sons of Art*: of a way and method of deriving down and continuing the virtues of Planets and Constellations in certain Images prepared according to Art. *In Natural Philosophy*, we are as much abused by others, which tell us of a way to procure Prophetical Dreams, to exalt all Bodies into Gold, to make mighty Impressions upon the Air, to advance Imagination to a capacity of working Wonders, both upon the minds of Men, and (even greatly distant) Bodies: of an Art to read and expound all the Cryptick lines in your hand and face. *In Medicks*, we have some confident Undertakers to rescue the Science from all its reproaches and dishonors, to cure all Diseases by understanding the Analogies between the parts of the greater and lesser World; nay, to cut off the very intail of death from mankind. *In Science in general*, we meet with some of the Sons of Pride, which tell us of an *Ars magna*, a *Pansophia*, a method to bless Man with the real substance of that happiness [*An universal Knowledge*] the catching at whose vain and flying shadow cost him the loss of Paradise. *In Divinity*, Gad, behold a troop cometh of persons which begin their inquiries where all wise-men make an end, Cabbalists, Pretenders

tenders to Revelations, to an understanding of Signs and mysterious Prophecies, strange Providences, things to come, the pretended Mysteries wrapt up in some sacred numbers and names, the intent and meaning of Prodigies, some more spiritual Discoveries and mysterious Nations in Religion, &c.

○ All which Pretenders to a *πᾶσι*, somewhat beyond the common size of humane ability, men are easily perswaded into great thoughts of, either because *in magnis, vel voluisse mirandum*; or because all these pretences are but the many and various repeats of that first and most inviting temptation, the promise of a more raised and excellent knowledge than we have already; or because the general ignorance of such pretend-ers helps them to set off their wares and themselves with a great confidence, which hath the power of fascination upon weaker minds, persons not secured by the counter-charm of a great knowledge and resolution.

○ And therefore I think it not safe to trust the constancy of our minds against all Opinion of Prophecies, Omens, Signs of Times, Presages by Prodigies, as also those other *splendida nuga* (nearly related to them) now mentioned, solely with Reason and Argument: It is a little necessary to confront a kind of sullen resolution against, to an almost obsti-

nate propension of mind towards them. And if Men would once value their Understandings so far, as to call all such husky and curious Arts and Studies (as the Chaldean Oracle doth all Divinations by the Extasies, the motions of birds, smoke, &c.)

*Ευνοεισιν ἀτάκτως ἡμῶν τὰ παιδιὰ καὶ τὰς ἀδύπολας*  
the recreations and entertainments of children, and the weak supports of the gainful trade of cheating and imposture, they would all (like Fables which want Auditors) quickly sink into darkness and silence: but as long as there are any Persons in the World troubled with the fits of the first Mathex (Curiosity and Pride) there will never be wanting some that will thrust any such rotten and unsavory stuff under their noses.

If men were once perswaded into a great resolution against all such subtil vanities, the price of real and substantial wisdom would quickly rise in the World; and the Tree of Knowledge (these suckers, which are ready to starve it; being once thrown off) would thrive and spread: men, when they came to discourse, would be more sure of each others Principles; and Religion would be no longer rendred to the neglect and scorn of subtil men, because appearing to them but a cold form of some pitiful modes and observations, a systeme of blind fears;



or lean and ignorant imaginations.

What hath been hitherto discours'd (if it any where seem to hit) hath not been at all level'd against the *Philosophical* study of Prodigies, or intended any disparagement of all sober inquiries into, or history of the *Heteroclitica Natura*, Preternatural Generations, either in Heaven or Earth. It is to be wished that there were a kind of Philosophy-Office, wherein all such unusual Occurrences were registred; not in such fabulous and antick circumstances wherein they stand recorded in the Writers of Natural Magick (designing nothing but wonder in their Readers,) nor with a superstitious observation of any such dreadful Events with which such Relations are usually stam'd, in the Writers which intend a service to Religion in them: But in such faithful and sober notices of their several circumstances, as might assist the understanding to make a true Judgment of their Natures and Occasions. Such an History would serve the reprehension of several Maxims in *Philosophy*, delivered upon a scanty and hasty inspection of Nature, as presented to view but in some one posture; and would give Religion a freedom from its more dangerous (because less suspected) Adversary *Superstition*. For as a distinct and full view of Second Causes begets *Religion* (because necessarily directing the Eye, at last, upon

Verulam. de  
Augm. Scien.  
l. 2. c. 2.

upon the *First*,) a superficial and imperfect notice, *Atheism*, (which, like the Bat, is so noted to fly abroad in the twilight, in a kind of middle state between the darkness of ignorance and light of knowledge,) so, an utter ignorance of Causes Natural leads (in more soft and impressive minds especially) to *Superstition*, a slavish observance of, and blind devotion toward God.

Not yet would I have one word concern'd the disparagement of that religious use which an understanding Piety may make of any more unusual work in *Nature*: which, by the rarity thereof, seems designed and fitted to awaken men to a more lively sense of the Wisdom and <sup>4</sup>Power of God, displayed in restraining some more violent, and assisting some more faint and languishing causes *therein*. The whole 29 *Psalms* was (as some learned men conceive) pen'd as a pious Meditation upon occasion of some extraordinary Thunder and lightning which had newly happen'd. Every monstrous Birth we see, may recommend to us the goodness of God who hath so curiously wrought that Tabernacle which our own Souls inhabit. All the words therefore which have been bestowed upon this Argument, have been directed solely to the discouraging of a servile and superstitious study of the singularities in Nature, and all regards of them as *Pregnosticks* of any future

2 Jer. 5. 22.  
Prov. 8. 28, 29.  
Psa. 111. 2.

+

future Evils, and approaching Alterations in the State. Which that they may take the readier hold of the Reader (even blunt nails will enter a soft and yielding matter) I do with a great seriousness recommend to his affections and endeavors, *A perfect complacency and acquiescence in all the present allotments of Divine Providence.* For it is onely when men are sick of things present, that they long for variety, and therefore have a very forward faith and affection for whatsoever Prophecies or Signs seem to give them the hopes and promises thereof. As *Nature* hath seated in some bodies a kind of restless desire of change, and motion from their present state; so *humor*, or interest, hath placed in some minds a kind of perpetual motion, an eternal desire of change and alteration: And therefore *Prophecies, Omens, Stories of Prodigies*, shall be readily attended to and contended for, for these things feed that humor; because encouraging in losers the hopes of a better game by some new shuffling and cutting, and in all persons not pleased with what pleaseth God, of a great change of Affairs in State.

It is the property of a true son of wisdom, ἀνὴρ σοφὸς καὶ οὐ μετανοῶν (as the *Moralist* speaks) heartily to kiss and embrace all the issues of the Divine Wisdom and Goodness: for he is not so vain as to measure the Wisdom

w Ezck. 10. 12.

x Dan. 4. 17.

dom and Goodness of all the results of Gods Counsels by the reference they bear to the little Ends, Interests or Opinions of so inconsiderable a piece of the World as himself, or to think his two Eyes can see more than those many in *the Wheels* of Providence; He believes all Events to be either good in themselves, or in their ends and issues: And therefore he can live quietly *ex tempore*, and possess himself in peace, though in destitution of any Signs and tokens, common Prophecies or Prodigies to tell him news, and to read to him the History of a future time. Sollicitous inquiries into the condition of Times to come are *planted* by Curiosity, *watered* by a great disgust of things before us, and *receive increase* from distrustful fears in reference to *hereafter*; against all which plagues of the mind, a quick and active perswasion *that the most High ruleth in the Kingdoms of Men*, and his Wisdom and Goodness preside in all Affairs of the World, is an easie and perfect Antidote; and by consequence, against all regards to Prodigies, Prophecies, Omens, both the tokens and fomenters of them.

F I N I S.

A  
DISCOURSE

Concerning  
Vulgar Prophecies.

WHEREIN  
The Vanity of receiving them as  
the certain Indications of any future  
Event is discovered;

And some

CHARACTERS  
of Distinction between true and pretend-  
ing Prophets are laid down.

---

By JOHN SPENCER, B.D.

---

ISA. 44. 24, 25.

*I am the Lord, that stretcheth forth the Heavens alone,-----  
that frustrateth the tokens of the Lyars, and maketh Di-  
viners mad.*

EZEK. 13. 9.

*My hand shall be upon the Prophets that see Vanity, and that  
divine Lies; they shall not be in the Assembly of my  
People.*

---

L O N D O N,

Printed by J. Field for Timothy Garthwait at the  
Kings head in S. Pauls Church-yard, 1665.

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## DISCOURSE

The

Practical Principles

WHEREIN

The Vanity of receiving them as

the certain indications of any future

and is discovered

And some

and after it

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and is laid down

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# THE PREFACE

**T**He Soul of Man was made for in-  
finite happiness and converse with God,  
and therefore, in a tacit sense  
thereof, is continually reaching  
and aspiring after it. But Lust and Pride  
having blinded its Eye, it is apt to affect  
and seek it in fond and fantastick ways.  
Whereas good men are (as Antoninus  
speaks) by a secret and inward way  
become familiar with God by  
holy practices, by profound Humility, by  
abstractions from the world and Lust;  
Men have conceived it is procured and  
maintained by going off from Reason, by  
Raptures, Visions, Prophecies, Enthusi-  
asms, hot and vigorous impressions of spi-  
rit; and have verily thought (as the An-  
cient Heathens by their Prophets) that  
they are scarce ever full of God, till they  
are half beside themselves. And therefore  
the Lives of the Romish Saints are stuffed

## THE PREFACE.

out with perpetual Stories of such things as these, which do but render them to the contempt of men that have a true and sober Notion of Religion.

In confidence of this conceit, such numbers of Devoto's in all Times have pretended Enthusiasm and extraordinary illapse from Heaven, though to different ends and purposes, according as a different habit of mind or body and some mutable circumstances of the Age or course of life might determine an hot Humor and busie Fancy (for it is little else) to exert it self.

Among the many giddy Fancies and Errors of the late Times, bred, like the Worms in the Manna, out of the Body of our corrupted Government and Discipline, this was that *monstrum* *monstrum*, leading imposture, That the true *Seculum Spulcrum Sancti* was now coming on upon the World, wherein the immediate Teachings of God should antiquate the more dead and obscure Teachings of the Gospel, as those did the more weak and cloudy Instructions of the Law; that the Minds of Holy Men should conceive (like the Virgin Mary) by the sole overshadowings of the Holy Ghost, without any Assistances from Man or Humane Literature. That Men should be authorized and assisted to the due performance of

## THE PREFACE.

of the Duties of publick Preaching and Praying by the Increments of God upon the place. That God was about no new Work, but his Secrets were still made known unto the Faithful. That the mighty impressions and propensions upon the Spirits of the Faithful, was an interpretative Voice from Heaven, a kind of Bath-Col to supply the defect of Scripture-Prophecy in Dispensations more dark and enigmatical. Whence it came to pass that every morbid heat of Passion and blind Zeal was christened by the name of an Ignis sacer, the sacred impress and discovery of the Holy Ghost, and every crazy Fancy and Dream dub'd a Prophetick Vision.

Now as Storms and Tempests at Sea, though they prove the Evils of many a private man, yet are the good things of Catholick Nature, because serving as a kind of natural Exercise to keep that vast Body of Waters from putrefaction: Thus howsoever the bold Pretences to Revelations, Prophecy, and a greater intimacy with the Divine Spirit, proved the great Evils of those particular Times, causing many (weaker vessels especially) to make shipwreck of Conscience and a sound Mind, and betrayed them to gross and shameful Notions in Religion and Policy; yet to the Church of God in general this hath proved

THE PREFACE.

the happy issue of this Ignis fatuus of Enthusiasm (in all the expresses thereof) even so effectual a Discovery of it, both in its Effects, those bogs of Sedition, Blasphemy, Profaneness, Giddiness, it leads unto, and in its Cause, onely a natural fervor and pregnancy of spirit in some more refined, and an heated Melancholy in other grosser Enthusiasts, then hath been formerly made; and such as might effectually secure the Person that can do more then believe, from being easily abused by such shining Vanities as any pretended Enthusiasms make a proffer of. So that the present Undertaking to lay forth the impostures wrapt up in this most famous instance of Enthusiasm, supposed Prophecy, may seem to have nothing to justify it but an honest intention: Especially considering that there are Penal Statutes provided to prevent the spreading of Seditious Prophecies, by the Severities of which those may be whipt into their wits, whom the Physick of an Argument cannot cure of their Prophetick Frenzies.

These Considerations would easily have perswaded me to have spared the Reader and my self a further trouble, but that I saw so great an affinity between the present and precedent Subject, that the Discourses upon both would (like both the feet)



## THE PREFACE.

feet) derive a mutual strength and assurance upon each other; and that the Prophecies which are the issues of an hot head and disturbed imagination, are but the one half of those which abuse the Faith of the People: I considered withal that Prophecy is the most obstinate piece of Enthusiasm, having our innate Curiosity and an Experience as great as Prodigies to make it considerable. Besides, while good Laws are the best Security of the Peace, sober Principles laid in the Minds of the People are the best Security of the Laws.

A DIS-

14

account thereof  
given, among Hebrews, Jews, Christians, with a view to  
notice of. Prophets as universally intended to be read  
and to common life. Two examples to which that taken  
of them in the Jewish, Celtic, Pagan, and Pagan  
conced in the table of Jewish, Pagan, and Pagan  
the Romans. The Origin, the ancient had of A.D. 15  
in Pagan, who. The Story of Greek, of what he means  
the prophetical number of the people, Judges of People  
Ethnic, statement how they found themselves against  
is inclined toward them in former times. The nations  
consequence in states and why that nation extreme  
places in the general sense of both, supporters of our  
a clear notice of. The affinity between Paganism and Jew-  
influx. Several constant pretenses to property of law  
one of intellectual improvement, and yet, in many of the  
present argument (inadequate to the age, because an age of sci-  
range of states off by occasional contemptible means. The  
remains of the New Testament and from them. The mis-  
one instance of them. From kind of false Prophecy, the

**T**H E hypocrites of things are as fa-  
miliar as those of war, for as there is  
a great deal of reprobate silver which comes  
the

# DISCOURSE

Of the Vanity of

## VULGAR PROPHECIES!

### CHAP. I.

#### *Some general accounts given of the Argument.*

Counterfeits in Art, Nature and Religion. False prophecy one instance of them. What kind of false Prophets the times of the New Testament are freed from. The miscarriage of States oft by occasions contemptible, noted. The present argument suitable to the age, because an age of action, of intellectual improvement, and yet, in many, of Enthusiasm. Several confident pretenders to prophecy of late, taken notice of. The affinity between Prodigies and Prophecies in the general ends of both. Prophecies of evil consequence in States and why. Our Nation extremely inclined toward them in former times. The ancient Ethnick Statesmen how they secured themselves against the prophetick humor of the people. Judges of Prophecy in Plato, who. The Sibylline Oracles of what use among the Romans. The Opinions the ancients had of Prophecy, couched in the fable of Terebia. Religion a great sufferer by them in the Practice, Credit, Doctrine and Foundation thereof. These noted prejudicial to the mind, and why. And to common life. Two examples to evince that, taken notice of. Prophecies as universally attended to as Prodigies, amongst Heathens, Jews, Christians, with a threefold account thereof.

**T**HE hypocrisies of things are as familiar as those of men, for as there is a great deal of reprobate Silver which carries the

a Gal. 6. 12.

b Eccle. 12. 10

c 2 Cor. 11. 14

d Rev. 2. 24.

e Zach. 13. 2.  
f King. 18. 19.

the image of the King and looks like Sterling, so there are in Art, in Nature, in Religion the many instances of things that only <sup>a</sup> *come common* carry a fair face, bear title and garb beyond their true and real value. As there is a true Masculine Rhetoric wherein the golden apples of some rich conceptions are set in the silver pictures of some words of desire, expressions chosen and fitly set, so there is a *moderata*, the charm of some soft and sweet words and periods which (like a tinkling cymbal) make a pretty sound in the ear for a time, and rather inchant the mind than inform it. In Nature also there are the real Diamonds, and Angels of light, and others which by Sophistry <sup>c</sup> *μεταμορφωσις* are only transformed into their likeness and usurp their title. Religion also (through the Arts of evil men) is forced to carry two different faces of things under the hood of one and the same name and outward appearance: in which we find lying wonders, <sup>d</sup> fantastical depths, a knowledge falsely so called, a Spirit of error, and so false Prophecies disguised in the titles and images of the true. It is indeed the great blessing promised to the times of the New Testament, that we should be delivered from all those <sup>e</sup> *נביאים שקר* (as the Targum styles them) <sup>f</sup> *Prophets of the Spirit of a ly*, which should call

call men to the worship of Images and God hath fulfilled the same unto us, there being now none of those lying Prophets among us that the minds of the Heathens were abused withall, who used to erect some Idols themselves had devised, telling the people *they were the Images of such a star or constellation* שְׁהוּרָהּ כְּכּוֹכָבָא *which was made known to them by Prophecy.* Yet there are still left among us (that there may be an exercise of Christian prudence as well as of other Virtues) some Prophets of a by, which call men to a reverence of the images of their own busy Fancy, some who *as Theodores of the Enthusiasts of his Age* call the idle phantasms of their dreams, prophetick visions.

f Maimonid.  
de Idolat. c. 1.  
sect. 3.

g Theodor. l. 4.  
c. 10.

Our present business therefore is, to rub off the gile of these shining vanities *Suppressed Prophecies*, and to discover the folly of that faith and affection with which they are so generally entertained, and in order thereunto to lay down some characters of distinction between real and pretending Prophets, and to inquire (as we can) whether *the Sun be quite gone down over the Prophets*, and the minds of men never visited now with any beams of Prophetick light, so familiar in the former Ages of the World.

h Mic. 3. 6.

The



The Argument, I know, is as fruit-  
 ful a field of imposture as the forego-  
 ing, and the persons to whom I oppose my  
 self therein, are men of a more exercised  
 faith then understanding, and there is not  
 thing more revered by some, and explo-  
 ded by others then *Prophecy*, and there-  
 fore I easily foresee that I shall (like the  
 candle) *pralucendo perire*, suffer greatly my-  
 self in the prepossest thoughts of the most  
 while attempting to give light to others in  
 so impofterous and diuigious an Argument as  
 this is. But when bodies Politick have been  
 often choked (like *Adrian*) with gnats,  
 ruined by some occasions they despised and  
 thought most beneath their caution, (*Pro-  
 phesies* and *Enthusiasms* among the rest) and  
 because if all men of more improved intelle-  
 ctuals should value themselves so far, as ne-  
 ver to stoop to a notice of those contempti-  
 ble errors which the people are abused with  
 all, no body would be informed, (as no bo-  
 dies fores cured if all should be nice.) I have  
 the intentions and hopes of a publick service  
 to ballance the prejudices of some severer  
 persons.

But that which more effectually recon-  
 led me to this attempt, was a regard to the  
 special suitability thereof to the present  
 Age: and the great Affinity between this  
 and the foregoing Argument.

The

The Age wherein our lot is fallen, is an Age of Action and Expectation, and in such times, prophecies generally take confidence to become publick, being then most grateful to men, usually very impatient of uncertainties where they are hugely concerned. Among the Jews we find Prophets and Oracles especially consulted in times of some publick distraction, and Polybius tells us that when the Armies of the Romans and Carthaginians were ready every day to joyn battle, everybodys mouth was full of Oracles and Prophecies. Men upon such occasions are apt to believe as they affect, and then to presage as they believe. Besides, 'tis a time of improvement in all humane and divine knowledge, and that happy day seems risen upon us to which God hath promised an increase of Knowledge. Nature begins now to be studied more then Aristotle, and men are resolved upon a Philosophy that bottoms not upon phancy but experience, a Philosophy that they can prove and use, not that which commenceth in faith and concludes in talk. And considerate men are too much themselves now to be brought (like bees) to hive under any odd form of Opinion and party of men, by the confused noise and din of Carnal reason, the Spirit of God, Superstition, Reformation, and the coming in of Popery. Now while Wisdom seems

Πάρτα δ' ἐν  
τὰ παρ' αὐ-  
τοῖς λόγια  
πᾶσι τί τε δια-  
κούει.

Polib. Hist.  
lib. 3.

Dan. 12.4.

seems

seems thus to have ~~been~~ <sup>been</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> her ~~feather~~ <sup>feather</sup> pillars  
and her house is going up so fast, it is a du-  
ty to assist her work by removing all the  
rubbish of *Prodigies*, *Vulgar Prophecies*, and  
what ever Doctrine makes the minds of men  
soft and easy (by teaching men to believe  
without evidence) and so, unfit to make  
a due judgment of things. More over, 'Tis  
a time wherein (as 'tis usual) *Folly* is as busy  
as *Wisdom*. Never greater talk of *terrible*  
*Signs*, *Revelations*, *new lights*, *Prophecies*  
and *Visions* in our own and other Kingdoms  
then now. We have had 1 Volumes of *Pro-*  
*phesies* and *Visions* lately censored to the  
World, and that by men of no common  
name, and with a confidence, I think, be-  
yond the examples of History. For as ma-  
ny amongst our selves, disbelieve the *work-*  
*ings of God* though sealed with so many  
mighty signs, martyrdoms, accomplished  
predictions, a resurrection from the dead  
and the attestation of millions of wise and  
good men; so they protest their *visions* in  
the face of the Sun, without any considera-  
ble signs, and notwithstanding the con-  
tempt of all sober Christians, and those con-  
trary events whereby God hath *frustrated*  
and the *tokens of these years* and made these *vi-*  
*sions* mad. And some of them stick not  
to tell the World, that by *how much* the  
more that Great day of the Lord is, the

\* *See in trans-*  
*bric. edit. 1657*  
*Histor. Revel.*  
*edit. per*  
*J. A. C. 1659.*  
*Revel. Divin.*  
*Episcop. Edit.*  
*1663.*

more evidently and familiarly doth he re-  
 ceive his Prophecies, and what they under-  
 stand the frequent possession, and therefore  
 had fanatical Enthusiasts of the Quakers;  
 Isaranieis esse præfugis, quibus opem Dei  
 obfuscare nituntur, ut olim Janes & Jam-  
 bres Mosi resistere, to be the delusions of  
 the Devil, whereby they endeavour to obscure  
 the works of God, as Janes and Jambres  
 withstood Moses of old.

*k Histor. Rev.  
 p. 189.*

As for that Affinity noted between this  
 Argument and the fore-going, it will appear  
 in the correspondence observable between  
 Prodigious and <sup>Phec</sup> Promises in the General Na-  
 ture, and Consequents, and common acceptance  
 of them both.

in their General Nature. For as Pro-  
 diges are received (as the reason of the name  
 intimates) as a kind of *Real prophecies*, (pre-  
 dictions, as in a figure, of some great  
 plague or change in State.) So Prophecies  
 as a kind of *Verbal Prodigious*, wonderful  
 indications of the fortunes of Kingdoms or  
 private persons: both feed the curiosities  
 of men by the pretended notices of the fu-  
 ture, and have alwayes gone undivided in  
 the Opinions and regards of easie men, both  
 among Heathens and Christians. Having  
 therefore imbibed, and dreyed up that one  
 breast, the opinion of Prodigious, which used  
 to suckle this childish humor of curiosity in

*Quis ostendunt, portendunt, monstrant, prædicunt, ostenta, portenta, monstra, prodigia, dicuntur.*  
*Tull. de Divin. l. 1.*

men :

men: I shall endeavour to do as much to that other of *common Prophecies*, that so the minds of men may be forced to take to some more substantial nourishment, and may come the more entire and undisturbed to sober and wise thoughts.

2. In their *evil consequences*. These *Vulgar Prophecies* having at malign an influence upon the *State*, *Religion*, the *Understanding*, and *Common life* as *Prodigies*.

They are of very evil consequence in the *State*. The monuments of our own and forreign Nations assure us that there is not a more fruitful womb of seditions and confusions in States then the Opinion of such predictions is.

1. See Lord  
Howard De-  
sensat. against  
Prophecies.  
c. 20.

He that shall read our *Histories* (saith our great *Lawyer*) shall find what lamentable and fatal evils have fallen out upon vain prophecies, carried out of the inventions of wicked men, pretended to be ancient, but newly framed to deceive true men, and withall, how credulous and inclinable to them our Countrey-men in former times have been. The reason why the publication of any such evil prophecies (as he tells us) hath been made felony without clergy by some ancient Statutes in our Kingdom, and still interdicted under severe penalties both in our own and forreign Countries. What attempt will not take confidence





οὐκ αὐτῶν ἐνδεῶς πομπῆς, καὶ οὐκ ὁμοῦ δια-  
 τάξιν νόμου, ὥς Μάρτυς ἐπαγορεύει τις.  
 Wherefore the law provides that an order of  
 Prophets be set Judges over all Enthusiastick  
 Divinations, which Prophets some by mi-  
 stake call Diviners. Where indeed the Or-  
 der of Prophets to whom He gives the pre-  
 heminence, were none else but wise and pru-  
 dent Men (as a<sup>o</sup> late Writer, truly) but  
 whereas he adds, who by reason of the Saga-  
 city of their Understandings were able to  
 judg of those things which were uttered by  
 this dull spirit of Divination, which resided  
 only in faculties inferior to Reason, I conceive  
 he misapprehends the end and office of  
 these prudent Persons; who were indeed  
 Judges, but not to interpret but to mode-  
 rate these prophetick fires. For if these  
 Enthusiasts were really divine, no wise man  
 would, and if really phrenetical, no wise man  
 could judg them, so as to expound and inter-  
 pret them; for can any man make any sober  
 judgment of the phantasms and heats of dis-  
 traction, or find any reason in that which  
 never approached the faculty of Reason?  
 These Wise Men therefore seem a kind of  
 Ethnic Sanhedrim to judg of pretended  
 prophecy in an authoritative way, and to  
 expunge or expound according as might best  
 comport with the occasions of State. And  
 the better to blanch over their Sentences  
 and

o Mr Smith  
 Disc. of Pro-  
 phesy. p. 195.

and to make them look like Oracle, they were themselves reported and verily thought by the people, really prophetick persons. Answerable to which subtil men among the *Gracians*, the *Romans* had constantly chosen out of the City, their sole Keepers and Interpreters of the *Sibylline* prophecies, which served as a kind of *Ethnick Alcoran*, expounded alway by those *Mufties* according as the circumstances of State might require: and 'tis not unlikely that *Cæsar* had been tampering with one of them, who told the *Romans* in open Senate, as from the Oracles of *Sibylla* that *he that they had now their King in reality, must have the title of King too, if they would be in a safe condition.*

*P. Tull. de Div.*  
*l. 2. sub fin.*

Incline to believe that this political Sophism in reference to Prophecy, was couched by the Poets in the fable of their *Hemaphrodite-Prophet Teresa*, whom they feign stricken with blindness by *Juno*, but in recompense of that ill turn, blest by *Jupiter* with prophecy: and further that this person had the forms of both Sexes, and was often instrumental to accord many differences and strifes among the Gods. Wherein they seem to intimate that prophecy (as found among them) was given only to persons bereft of the use of Wisdom, as in a dream, or in the eclipse of reason by a

ἡ φῶς [αἰ-  
Τερεσίη] ἀν-  
δρα καὶ γυναι-  
κα γεγονέναι  
αὐτῶν, καὶ ἁμ-  
βοτέρων ἔχειν  
ταῖς πλάσεσι,  
καὶ πολλὰς  
μάχας τῶν θε-  
ῶν διδύσαν-  
τα, &c. *Just.*  
*Mari. Quæst.*  
*Ὁ Resp. ad Or-*  
*thod. Q. 146.*

μα (as *Plutarch* calls it) *Prophetic efflux*, (in truth, a subtil vapor ascending the body of the *Pythia* from those hollow caverns over which she stood, and begetting a kind of dry drunkenness in her for a time, and so disposing her to an imitation of the Ecstasies and prophecies of an Enthusiast.) Or else of the very *habit* of wisdom; (and that by *Juno*, a hand of Providence) — as to men distracted, hypochondriacks, Epileptical persons, old women: and this by God, to

ἔλαττον ὅσον  
μείον ὡς μαν-  
τικῶν ἀφρο-  
συνῆς θεοῦ ἀν-  
θρωπίνῃ δέ-  
δωκεν, ὅς τις  
ἂν ἐννῶς ἐφά-  
πτεται, μαντι-  
κῆς ἐνδεὲς,  
ἢ ἢ καὶ  
ὑπὸν τιῶν ἱ-  
ερωμένων  
πρόφητας δὲ  
ταμὴν, ἢ διὰ  
νόσον, ἢ πῖνα  
ἐνδεσασμὸν  
παράλλας.  
*Plat. in Tim.*

compensate their great blindness and folly in all other matters. Now these Prophecies seemed to carry the form of a *Woman*, as being delivered generally by that Sex, but constantly by persons extremely ignorant, credulous, talkative, and impotent both in mind and body; and of a *Man*, as being directed, expounded and over-look'd by the care and wisdom of some prudent Men. And the fable seems further to intimate of what singular Use in State, these pretended prophecies proved (when subtilly managed) to compound differences among the Gods, *Mind of* minds or power too high to be set down by any Law but what pretends from God; and to conclude all *pro* and *con* in a Nation about matters referring to the Gods and Religion. Accordingly the ancient law-givers, *Numa*, *Scipio*, *Lycurgus*, *Lysistratus*, *Sextorius*, and the rest, called their laws *Oracles*, and the

ten tables pretended from God as well as the two. And Tally advised the secret custody of the Sibylline Oracles, *Valeantque* (saith he) *ad deponendas potius quam ad suscipiendas novas religiones*; thus some subtil men among the Jews, to accord the fierce disputes between the Schoool of Hillel and Schammai, invented the story of a Bath Kol (the lowest degree of prophecy, according to them) a voice from heaven, saying, *Et horum & illorum verba sunt verba Dei viventis*. But when the laws of God will not warrant us to tell a ly for his honor, much less for our interest, it is an instance of the piety and policy of the State to enact severe laws against persons of so prostitute a Conscience, as to encourage a sedition by any pretended prophecy: that so the just reverence of Divine prophecy may be secured, and Faction may not use those Arts to disturb, which Honesty dare not to secure the common peace.

2. *Vulgar Prophecies have as malign an influence upon Religion. In the practice thereof*: for in an Opinion of such things, the thoughts of some men are wholly entertained with enquiries *where will God be next*, and their great question is, *Watchman, what of the night?* what news of things as yet in the dark and out of view? the work of the day scarce ever approacheth their thoughts,

*Vid. Doctar  
Lightfoot,  
Hor. Habr.  
p. 156.*



thoughts: the great sign with them of a familiar acquaintance with God is, when he is continually whispering news in mens ears, and making them intimate to his secrets, and no man shall be thought a spiritual preacher by them, but he that can loose the seals of the Apocalyptick visions. In the *interim* by such fond thoughts and curiosities the minds of men are made vain and trifling, their spirits too subtil and airy to fix upon a serious thing, and while *their eies are thus, at the ends of the Earth*, they neglect to heed their way, and become (like silly birds) but the fairer mark for the Fowler, by standing thus at gaze. And as great a sufferer by such things, is Religion in the *Reputation thereof*; for when subtil men shall see us (like the ancient *Egyptians*) inshrine every Ape, give reverence to every vain person and clouted rhyme, which may ape the gestures and stile of a prophet or prophecy, they will be ready to conclude Religion a meer Systeme of phantasms, inexplicable impressions, and a tutoring of men to a faith of contradictions or meer imaginations. And all the *Devo-to's* in the world shall be thought a Society of easy men that can say much and prove nothing, and that (what was falsely said of the *Jews* of old) give worship to an Asses head, to the idle Visions of their own or other mens heads, as soft and ignorant as theirs.

theirs. Besides, an easy faith of such Vulgar Prophecies as of divine impression, doth greatly prejudice Religion *in the Doctrine* thereof. For men will readily conclude him a *Man of God*, and that the *Word of the Lord is with him* (be his Doctrine what it will) that seems to tell them things to come, (the reason why the Seducers of greatest name in Story have pretended Prophecy.) The Church of *Rome* proves her self the *Temple of the Living God*, and Gods presence with her, by the Voice of his Oracles heard therein. She hath (she tells us) the *Spirit of Prophecy* (called the *Testimony of Jesus*) to bear <sup>u</sup> witness to her Doctrine, discipline and worship: and to this purpose gives us in a list of her Prophets (but most of them women) and of their wonderful predictions, and challengeth us to instance any such parallel examples. To whom we return, <sup>w</sup> *We are not careful to answer thee in this matter*: while the house of God with us is *built upon the foundation of the true Prophets and Apostles*, it will not need daubing with any such *untempered mortar* as Vulgar Prophecies are, to give strength or beauty thereunto. But Religion is a far greater sufferer by such Spurious Visions, and Prophecies, *in the foundation thereof*, that *Sure Word of Prophecy* upon which it bottoms. There can hardly be a more subtil way

<sup>u</sup> Vid. Boetium  
Eugub. de Signis Eccles. l. 6  
c. 2.

<sup>w</sup> Dan. 3. 16.

invented to sink the value and credit of all divine prophecies and illapses, then the multitude of those unskillful Enthusiasms which are in the World. Men will quickly grow coy, and loth to trust themselves with a Revelation, when they see so much imposture breaking in upon the world that usurps that name. The Ethnick world had been for many ages imposed upon by *Enthusiasms, Dreams, Oracles, Prophecies, Apparitions of the Gods*, till *Socrates* (in a discovery of the Vanity of them) called men to an use of judgment, and taught them to entertain no doctrine without or against apparent reason. And the many abuses formerly put upon them, made them not only readily entertain his doctrine, but so prejudiced them against the very air of a Revelation, that as the Jewish masters were perpetually demanding of *signs*, so the Gentile Philosophers, *Demonstrations*, of the first preachers of the Gospel, and upbraiding them that their Doctrine was \* *ωδύ-  
δοξος* *ἢ μὴ δυνάμει* *ὁ λόγος ἀποδείχθῃ* *ἀδύνατον* *ἀποδεικνύμενον*, a paradoxical doctrine, and altogether impossible to be demonstrated. And amongst our selves, while some must have an Enthusiasm in all the great turns of life, and must be fed, like the *Patriarchs*, with Visions and Prophecy, others (seeing the impostures wrapt up in them) hate such light meat,

\* *Iust. Martyr.*

in *Dial. cum Tryph.* p. 207.

τὸ ἀδύνατον

and begin to look upon a Revelation as a matter un-intelligible, both in the maner of conveyance, and the way of discovery and discrimination, and to think no man can answer the taking up of any Opinion upon the credit of a prophetick testimony, to his cool and advised thoughts. But if the more fortunate credulity and simplicity of the persons to whom these Visions and prophetick Raptures happen, make them impregnable by a temptation to any such subtil Atheism, yet still Scripture is disparaged while the affections of men are divided between an old Prophecy and a new, and that sickly humor in some men of longing after somewhat new in Religion, is fed, mens gadding Fancies are gratified, and Religion is exposed to the danger of being evaporated into air and rapture.

3. *These pretended Prophecies do as much usurp upon the mind and understanding:* because instructing both Deliverers and Receivers onely to a bold and forward Faith. For they that deliver them presume it were not to believe but to dispute, if they should (like \* Gideon) desire a sign of God that it is \* Judg. 6. 17. *he indeed that talketh with them:* these impressions they conceive are both writing and seal to themselves, and proclaim by their own mighty force and vivacity that they are set on by a divine hand: the mind of  
man

y Maimonid.  
Mor. Nevoc.  
P. 3. c. 50.

man (say they) under the Divine Visitations, is onely *מְדַבֵּר בְּלִבּוֹ*, to attend, in an humble passiveness and silence, to God, while instructing it by the whispers of his Spirit. A Doctrine which is virtually an infinite imposture, and which brings a man into *מִדְבַּר הַחַיִּים* (as the *Arabians* call the Wilderness) a *desert of wandering*, wherein he may run for ever from one wild imagination to another; and contains as much Reason therein, as the conceit of that Mariner that should think his Ship ran a right course onely because driven with a fierce wind. And as much do these Prophecies usurp upon the Understandings of those to whom they are tendred; we must trust our Faith with these things, but never offer to demand first the security of some divine Sign; we must believe them of divine inspiration onely because we are told they are so: and if we demur, as thinking the condition unreasonable, we are bidden to have a care we be not *found to fight against God*, and so must become fools for fear we prove knaves. But when our Blessed Savior himself would not so far controul the Law of reasonable Nature in Man, as to require him to a Faith of his Prophecies before sufficient assurance given of their Divinity; we know not to value our selves, if we suffer a Faith of these common Prophecies to be forc'd



forc'd upon us, which offer nothing to assure them but solemn looks and Verily verily. The World swarms with pretended Prophecies and Revelations; we have not onely our *monthly* but our daily *Prognosticators*, and therefore the honest looks of the proposers are not sufficient grounds of trust in this business. That proposition, *Intellectus passivus recipit phantasmata*, is a truth also in Divinity; the soly passive intellect, that is impressive and easie, that doth not use it self to discourse and judg, receives Fantasm into it self, little besides the airy Visions of its own or other mens vain imaginations.

a. *These Prophecies are of very evil consequence in common life:* They give silly men to conceit they are never Gods favorites till they are half mad, and have constant intelligence from Heaven by some new Vision. They torture mens minds with infinite anxieties, and lay upon their thoughts the Evils of an Age to lament at once. They encourage them in very evil purposes, by the confidence they give them of success. They keep men from possessing themselves in peace by a secure repose on the wisdom and goodness of God. They tempt them to a neglect of those faithful and acknowledged Rules of life, *Scripture, and the Maxims of Reason*, to attend to measures fantastical and never proved.

z Senatus plu-  
rimus ei tri-  
buebat, & ip-  
sus permoti  
concionibus,  
nihil sibi con-  
tra Regem su-  
scipiendum  
esse putabant.  
Comin. de  
Bel. Neapolit.  
l. 3.

proved. They cow mens spirits, and betray  
those factors which Reason affords and com-  
mands the use of. Thus the z Historian tells  
us the Senate of Florence would by no means  
make opposition to the French King *Charles*  
the eighth, because advised to the contrary  
by the reputed Prophecies of *Savonarola*.  
The Examples of men which have run  
themselves upon strange Precipices by fol-  
lowing these foolish fies, are infinite. I shall  
instance but two, to stop, if it were possible,  
the mouths of my two Adversaries in this  
Argument, the *Papist* and the *Enthusiast*.  
The first shall be the strange Example of  
*Pope Gregory the ninth*, who was perswaded  
by the pretended Visions and Prophecies of  
*Catharina de Senis* to go from *Avenion* to  
*Rome*, against the Reasons and Perswasions  
of his Cardinals and Friends; whereby he  
became the occasion of that Schism which  
lasted for about forty years in that Church.  
In an easie foresight whereof, a few hours  
before his death (which hapned within half a  
year after his coming thither) having the ho-  
ly Eucharist in his hands, he protested before  
them all, that they should beware of either  
Men or Women delivering, under a shew of  
Religion, the Visions of their own head; be-  
cause himself, being seduced by such, had, in  
a neglect of the sober counsels of his Friends,  
drawn himself and the whole Church into  
danger

a Hic positus  
in extremis,  
habens in ma-  
nibus sacrum  
Christi corpus,  
protestatus est  
coram omni-  
bus ut cave-  
rent five à vi-  
ris five à mu-  
lieribus sub  
specie religio-  
nis, loquenti-  
bus visiones  
sui capitis,  
quia per tales,  
&c. J. Ger-  
son. de Exam.  
Doctrin. con-  
sid. 3.



that so silly men may speak truth.

Thirdly, *Prophecies and Prodigies touch and agree in the universal reception of them both.* Prophecy never wanted Professors or Auditors in any Age or place in the World. It was the Opinion of some of the *Jews*, and most of the *Gentile* Philosophers of old, that the Soul came down into the Body, pregnant with <sup>d</sup> *δωραυτος μωρτυμ*, a prophetick power, *τυφλῆται ὁ ὁρατὴς πνεῦμα δὲ συνέρον ἀνάμεικτον αὐτῆς ἐ σὺλχυον*, but it is muffled and blinded because of its commixture and confusion with this lump of Earth, which perpetually sends up such a thick mist of *Fantasms* before its Eyes, that it cannot now see *afar off*. A Doctrine, which the deport of the Soul, while a prisoner to its own house, seems a little to encourage: for as the *Bull* in the Fable, having sustained a great loss of cloth, is fancied to stand ever since by the high-way catching hold of every mans clothes, in hopes to recover its own lost goods; so the Souls of men seem to express a tacit sense of a great loss in regard of the knowledg of things future, in this embodied state, in that they stand (as it were) *in triviais*, and hastily catch at any pretending Prophecy and shadow of Divination: and indeed I have *nothing* (in this matter) more to *accuse my own Nation* than others of, it being an argument of the blindness of most

d Plutarc. de  
Defect. Orac.

CAP. I. *Vulgar Prophecies.*

most Ages and Nations, that they readily swallow down such Flies as these when tendered to them.

What place and repute Prophecy held among the *Gentiles* of old, those words *Ἐκδοκασαί, Δρόλεστοι, ἐνδοι, Μυστατακται, φοιβόλεστοι, δεομύστες, δεσφῆ*, and the like, and that vast fable of *Chaldeans, Astrologers, Soothsayers, Necromancers, Interpreters of Dreams and Prodigies, Diviners by the Smoke, the Extā, the Incense on the Altar, by a Staff, the chirping of Birds*, all of familiar occurrence in their Writings, are a sufficient assurance. Particularly the Eastern Nations were so mad upon Divination, that *מלאי מזרח* they are full of the East *Isai. 2. 6.* seems used proverbially by the Prophet, to set forth that mighty passion with which the *Jews* were carried after Divination and the knowledge of Futurities. And with how easie a Faith the *Jews* used to meet any pretenders to Prophecy, though calling them (to the most open defiance of Reason and Religion) *Idolatry*, the Writings of the Old Testament will sufficiently resolve us. And Christians (though these *Vulgar Prophecies* have been proved, by an infinite Experience, a dead catch, devoid of the life of truth and perspicuity) stoop as greedily to them, when ever thrown before them, as if they were all Oracle. For they easily believe



believe no man to be so projectedly Atheistical, as to intitle God to the Visions of his own brain: not considering that the spirit of heated Melancholy may inspire these Prophets, and abuse them with some vigorous impressions as much as they do other men.

Now it cannot but seem strange to our first thoughts, that while all other Sects and impostures suited to the present *gusto* of the people, have had their peculiar times and places of acceptance, and the *Wheel of Fortune* (as it is called) hath gone over them all and crush'd them in the dust, Enthusiasts and pretences to Prophecy should prove an obstinate cheat which all Ages and Nations have been thus gull'd withal; especially considering that the hiding of Events from us is so great a security to the quiet of our minds, and *felicities* are always greater, and Evils (because they then afflict us but once) the lighter, which do surprize us. This so strange and catholick a Vanity must determine our Inquiries after some catholick and immutable Causes in humane Nature which may give us some probable account thereof. They are (I conceive) especially these three:

I. A catholick presumption of the singular readinesse of God to communicate with Man, especially if a more refined person,

מכר

מכלל דרכי העם and *separate from all the ways of the people* (as the Masters say a Prophet must be.) This perswasion may grow either from a kind of tacit sense in the Soul that it was made for converse with God, to refer to him, to derive light and law from him. A remembrance of which birthright of the Soul remained a while in the more simple and innocent years of the World, in that frequent intercourse between God and Man, by the mission of Angels, vouchsafing of divine Visions and Prophecies, immediate Oracles, and that administration of civil affairs in the *Jewish* Kingdom by the immediate direction of God himself. Or else (which is more explicable) it might possibly arise from a fantastical measure of goodness in God. Men have thought it could not stand with the goodness of God to suppose him reserved, and to leave them in the dark in some very doubtful and perplexed circumstances of life: and therefore *si Dei sint, divinatio est* was thought by *Tully* and others a very natural consequence. And a late Writer, to prove Prophecy not yet ceased, placeth this in the front of his *demonstrations* (so he calls them) *the eternal duration of the Divine Goodness and Bounty*; which will oblige him (saith he) to as free a communication of this prophetick light now, as in the years of old: and therefore

f Inexcusabi-  
lis ergo est ho-  
minum illorū  
malitia & te-  
meritas, qui  
hunc divina  
gratia fontem  
exsiccatum ho-  
dic volunt:  
non minus  
peccādo quam  
malevoli Phi-  
listhæi, Gen.  
26. 18, &c.  
Author. lib. cui  
tit. Probat. Vis.  
apud Comen.  
in Hist. Re-  
vel. p. 204.

concludes his Argument with a brand upon the *inexcusable wickedness and rashness of those men who would have this Fountain of Divine Grace dried up*, while denying Prophecy. But who art thou, *O vain man*, that wilt thus *mete out the Heavens with thy span*? prefer thy short thoughts of what is fit and good the measures of infinite Bounty and Goodness? Doth not the *Papist* conclude an infallible spirit in the Church, from the same topick the *Enthusiast* doth a propheticall spirit therein, even because God's goodness will not permit him to withhold so great a Blessing? Certainly if God's goodness prove the spirit of Prophecy to be at all in the Church, it will prove it also as plentifully poured out now, as in the primitive Times, God being as rich in goodness now as then.

2. *Opinions of this World vast and unmeasured, is another great support of the credit of Vulgar Prophecies.* Men in all times have been apt to value the concerns of this World amiss, to think persons and affairs hold the same place in the thoughts of God as of a man, and could not imagine that what was a great reality to their enchanted minds, was but *πολλὴ φαντασία*, a great Fancy in the account of Heaven: and therefore easily conceived that all Events of greater note came with observation, and had

had the harbinger of a Prodigy or Prophecy to run before and give notice when ever they are coming after. This Vulgar Judgment of things drew forth that speech from the *Roman Historian*, Καί μοι πολλάκις ἐπέλθῃς *Zosim. Histor. l. 2:* δαυμάτι, &c. It hath often occurred to my thoughts as a Wonder, that when the City of Byzantium hath risen so exceedingly, that no City besides can vie fortunes or greatness with it, ἀγῶνας ἐν δυνάμει, no Prophecy was ever given our Ancestors from the Gods of its singular felicities and increase. And my thoughts (as he goes on) oft running upon this strange instance, πολλάς τε βιβλούς ἱστορίας & ἀπομνημονεύματις ἀνελθὼν, having turned over many Volumes of History and Collections of Oracles, scarce at last have I light upon an Oracle of Sibylla Erythrea which seems to carry some prophetick ayrs of the succeeding grandeur of this City. But yet after a full recital of the Oracle, he concludes (as he had reason, so loose and general the words are) If the Oracle shall seem to any one to speak a different sense, let him take to it if he please.

Εἰ δὲ τὸ τὸ  
 ἔχον ἐπε-  
 ρως ἔχειν ὁ-  
 κεί, πάντῃ  
 νοεῖται.

3. There is in the minds of men an infinite thirst after the knowledg of Futurities. What purchase would be thought (by many men) too great for the knowledg of such things as these, How long such a King shall reign, who shall succeed to the Throne, when

*Antichrist shall fall, how long they shall live, whom they shall marry, what shall be the issue of such a War, when such a cloud of affliction shall go off from their Tabernacle: this thirst made the Religion of the Gentiles (that thought there was nothing beyond the Horizon of sense) almost nothing but a continued Divination, an unwearied pursuit of this knowledg, in Oracles, in Omens, in Prophecies, in Prodigies, in Auguries, in the Signs of Heaven, in the Guts of the Sacrifice, and the like; and so far befooled them that they oft preferred the ravings of a mad-man, the chirpings of a Bird, the babble of an Astrologer, and the Dreams of an old woman, to greater veneration than the words of the wise; and made the smoke of his house appear a better Oracle than the man of counsel that dwelt in it. And an impatience of the ignorance of things to come, fooled the Jews as well as the Gentiles out of their Reason and Religion both at once, tempting them to ask counsel at their stocks, and to seek to their Staff to declare futurities unto them. Amongst our selves a like affection for this knowledg betrays so many men to such Opinions of Astrologers, Fortune-tellers, the predictions of Enthusiasts, and men upon a death-bed. Look as those gross vapors, which, while here below, are of no name and consideration, but*

g Hof. 4. 12.



as soon as they mount the Heavens, and carry light and fire with them, draw the eyes of men upon them, and are thought Divine presages. Thus those persons, whose grossness and dulness in all matters referring to Religion, Learning or common life, rendred them to the neglect or pity of sober men, as soon as that black humor in them takes fire, and the men seem to speak from Heaven, and to carry a prophetick light with them, they presently become considerable, are advanced the common Subjects of Discourse, their Prophecies are studied more then the Bible, and men wonder to see how little those fools-bolts mist of the mark they were level'd unto,

Now the teeth of men have thus water'd for this *forbidden fruit*, the knowledg of things to come, partly from a weakness and childishness of temper whereby they cannot relish and digest the *strong meat* of substantial Doctrine and solid argument; partly from some present uneasiness of condition, the duration whereof looks like an Eternity to their short spirits, while they know no end thereof; partly in a vain hope that according as a good or an evil is prophesied concerning them, so their diligence may be applied to promote it or prevent it.

In consideration of all the premises, I have applied my self with the greater se-

Jer. 23. 26.

riousness to sink the reputation of those pretending Prophecies which so much ingross the studies and affections of many men, and to evince that pretenders to Predictions now, are, in all likelihood, *Prophets onely of the deceit of their own heart*, and that none of their Prophecies are to be attended to, as the certain indications of a future time.

G

CHAP.

## CHAP. II.

*The Vanity of Vulgar Prophecies detected from the unworthiness of the Pretenders to them.*

*All things and Persons thought by the Heathens to partake somewhat of a Prophetick Power. Wisdom onely excluded by them from any share in that gift. The Perswasion too much abetted by some Christians. To reprehend which, the first Consideration is proposed. That Prophetick Maxim, That Prophecy rests not but upon a wise, a valiant and a rich man, how understood by the Modern Jews; A conjecture concerning the Reason of it, in their sense. How understood by the more Ancient Jews, shewn at large from their Writings. God's Prophets never mad in a Prophetick fit. Wise-men an ancient addition of the Prophets: the title usurped by the Ancient Philosophers and Magicians. Jews, Christians and Heathens required sanctity in order to true Prophecy. None born Prophets of the Jews, and why. Our pretended Prophets largely proved devoid of all true Prophetical qualifications, and therefore not creditable. The Church of Rome why so fruitful in such Prophets.*

**H**OW much a fond affection for Prophecy had blinded the Minds of the Ethnick World, appears by their conceiting the Prophetick light as much diffused as the natural; and that as every thing did, according to its measure, participate of the Goodness, so of the Presence of God. They regarded the whole World, and all the parts thereof, but as so many softer

*i Sicut imago ipsius boni in omnibus Deum præfert, sic in cunctis est vestigium aliquod vaticinii. Jambl. de Myster. Ægyp. m. p. 89. k Tanta est exuberantia Providentiæ ad ostendenda nobis signa, ut etiam in calculis, virgīs, lignis lapidibus, frumento, sarinā, indicia præbeat futurorum, &c. Id. ib. p. 76.*

1 Plut. de  
Def. Orac.

Oracles: not a Star or Comet in the Firmament, not a Monster on Earth, not a Staff in the Wood, not a Gut in the Sacrifice, not a Line in the Hand, but was thought propheticall. The Earth was thought pregnant with a *ἰσορροπικὸν πνεῦμα ἐκ πνεύματος θεοῦ πατρὸς*, a kind of *Prophetick efflux and most Divine Spirit*, able to inspire the *Pythia* which stood over it. The Souls of all men were thought continually uttering some softer voices of Prophecy, but could not be heard till a Dream, or an Ecstasy, or a Frenzy had hush'd the clamors of an obstreperous Reason; and therefore even persons which could not speak sense, yet were presumed able to speak a Prophecy. In short, every thing was thought pregnant with some Presage, but onely Reason and *the Mind that had wisdom*; for as to that, their Doctrine was *μη δυνάμει φρόνησις πολλὰ μὲν ἀποσπέρει ἐκ κατὰ φύσιν νοῦν, ὁ ἐνθουσιασμός*, *mortal wisdom* (*stylo novo, corrupt Reason*) *diverts and extinguisheth that Enthusiasm* which would otherwise rise upon the Soul. And I am sorry to see, that amidst all this light which falls upon us from Heaven, men should yet be so little awakened out of the Dreams of *Gentilism*; as to think Divination almost as familiar a thing as the Heathens did; and that while we profess Miracles the Seal of Faith, and Prophecy the Rule, and Prophet the great

2 Plut. de  
Def. Orac.

great title of the Lord thereof, we should be so lavish of these sacred names, as to throw them away upon every prodigy which our Philosophy cannot Salve; and should still conceit a monster, a Comet, a great wind, the falling of the salt, or the tingling of the ears as prophetic as they did; and profane the sacred title of prophecy by bestowing it upon the crazy fancies of every idle visionist; and be ready to call him a Prophet, that hath scarce reason or morality enough to intitle him *Man*,

That this is no scandal may in part appear from the fore-going Treatise, but will more fully by what time we dismiss our first Consideration to reprehend the vanity of receiving these Vulgar Prophecies as Gods signs of the condition of a future time; which is this, *The Prophets which deliver them are generally devoid of all the Prophetic qualifications necessary to conciliate reverence to their Persons and Prophecies.* What

these are we may best learn from the Jewish Masters; now with them, 'tis a ruling

Maxim *אין הנבואה שורה אל על* n Maimonid. Praef. in Sed. Zer. & de fund. leg. c. 7. lect. 5. *Prophecy rests not but upon a wise, a valiant and a rich man:*

where by the *Wise man*, they understand a Man of prudence, and well practiced especially in their Cabbalistical and traditional learning, in great price with them: the other

words



aVid. Vorst. in  
Nor. ad Maim.  
p. 88.

p 2 Cor. 6. 2.  
Habac. 3. 17.

¶ Διὰ δὲ  
ταῦτα οἱ ἴδι-  
οὶ ἄνθρωποι ἀπα-  
νώσονται, ἢ διὰ  
τὸ ἐλπίζειν  
πρὸς τὸ διὰ τὸ  
φοβεῖσθαι.  
Artemid. O-  
neiroc. l. 2.  
c. 74.  
\* Ἰδιῶς καὶ  
πάντες οἱ  
ἐξ ὧν ὁ νεῖκος  
δημιουργεῖται.

words they expound in the rigid and usual sense and meaning of them; because observing in Scripture so much courage attending the prophetick Spirit, and generally great riches, excepting (say they) in the instances of *Moses, Samuel, Amos* and *Jona*; who yet did not conflict with extreme necessities, nor yet (I think) any of the Prophets, except in a time of some common calamity, when their straits and indigencies were rather a testimony to their office than a scandal. But I think the most rational account that can be given of this Maxim thus expounded, is this; The greatest assurances which *Faith* can require in the Prophet himself, are these two: that he appear a person not apt to be deceived himself (by taking the impressions of a strong Fancy for the *hand of God* upon him) which therefore, that first requisite of *wisdom* secures him from the Suspicion of; and that he appear a person not apt to deceive others. Now all aptness to deceive others grows either from a fear of displeasing by some *gracious*, or hope of reward by some *grateful* prediction; and therefore that he may be proof against temptation from fear or hope, they make him armed with valor and riches. And perhaps that \* Maxim we met with before among the heathens (somewhat like this among the present Jews) might

might carry some respects to some such considerations as these.

But I conceive the more Ancient Rab-  
bies intended some richer Sence in this Ma-  
xim, understanding חכם *the Wise man*,  
in a more lax and general signification: so as  
to comprehend a person furnished with all  
the kinds of wisdom: with *Natural wis-*  
*dom*, that is, Soundness of mind both be-  
fore and in the time of the prophetick *affla-*  
*tus*. Accordingly, <sup>r</sup> *Vorstius* tells us from <sup>r</sup> *Vorst. ub. sup.*  
the writings of the Jews, that among ma-  
ny other preparatory requisites to prophecy,  
the first they lay down is חכמה טבעית  
*a Natural disposition*, an *εὐεργαμία*, a firm and  
sound constitution of body, that there ap-  
pear no shew of a person crazy and sunk  
into phantasms. And <sup>s</sup> all writers ancient <sup>s</sup> *V. Blondell's*  
and modern have been careful to secure the <sup>Treat. of the</sup>  
Divine Prophets in the Opinion of being <sup>Sibyls. l. i.</sup>  
sober and rational, even while acted by the <sup>c. 25. fuse & Sher-</sup>  
Prophetick Spirit, fully able to conceive and <sup>log. Antiq.</sup>  
express what was sealed upon their minds by <sup>Heb. l. i. Dis. 4</sup>  
the *hand of God upon them*. God some-  
times sent his Servants (as <sup>t</sup> *Epiphanius* dis- <sup>L. i. cont. Hæ-</sup>  
tinguisheth) <sup>ref. 48.</sup> *ἐκστασι τῷ ὕπνῳ*, *the Ecstasy*  
*of sleep* (in the silence and composure  
whereof, the Soul might best attend the  
foster whisperings of the Spirit) *ἐκ ἐκστα-*  
*σις φρενῶν*, *not an Ecstasy of mind*, where-  
by the Understanding became useless, and  
the



sacred function: and therefore an ancient Doctor  $\gamma$  of the Jewish Nation tells us *אחר אברעים שנה המין החכמים* *after 40 years* (the time they assign to prophecy after the second Temple) *all the Wise-men were called the Men of the great Synagogue:* as conceiving that title now too August and sacred for them to wear, as the Primitive Bishops did the title of Apostles, to whose places but not to their measures of the Spirit they did succeed; and from hence it came to pass, that all the Devils prophets that assumed the skill, usurpt also the stile of God's Prophets, and were intituled *Wise men*; and perhaps the more ancient Philosophers amongst the *Gentiles*, <sup>as</sup> as they borrowed their Wisdom, so also the stile of *σοφοι* or *Wise men*, from the prophetic Doctors of the Jewish church so eminent in all the parts of Wisdom.

By *עשיר* *the rich man* there, they understand (as <sup>b</sup> *Maimonides* expounds the word) *השמה בחלקו* *the man that rejoiceth in his portion*, of riches, honor, health, pleasure, which his father hath allotted to him, that is of a *contented* and *cheerful* Spirit: for as that water which is not muddied with Earth nor ruffled with the wind, is most apt to receive and reflect an image, so that Minde which is not soyled with covetous

*y Cited by M. Smith, Disc. of Prophef. p. 269.*

<sup>2</sup> Dan. 2. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Exod. 7. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Seld. de Far Nat. & Gent. l. 1. c. 1.

<sup>b</sup> apud Cl. D. Pocock. Port. Mos. p. 227.

vetous desires as with earth, nor discomposed with anger or sorrow, as with wind, is most receptive of a prophetick image and impression. Accordingly we find none of Gods Prophets (nay none of his servants) blemished in Scripture for an inordinate love to this worlds goods; and so far did they stand from a morose and sower humor, that we scarce read of any inspired persons but

c Exod. 15. 21.

1 Sam. 10. 5. 7

1 Chron. 25. 1.

2<sup>d</sup> King. 3. 15.

were <sup>c</sup> frequent in the use of the instruments of Musick, that by the soft and gentle airs thereof they might allay all undue heats, and charm their unquiet thoughts into stillness and silence.

By that third word נָבוֹר they understood (I conceive) these three excellencies: (1.) *Great courage and presence of mind*: that which we may find all the Prophets in Scripture eminent for: Upon which account perhaps, the title of אִיתָן, *stout* or *valiant*, became the almost distinctive Epithite of a Prophet. Our forementioned <sup>d</sup> Master, speaking of *Abraham* describes him by the character of אִיתָן וִירָא, *this stout one*. And some of the *Rabbins* conjecture, that the Moneth *Tisri* or *September* is stiled יָרֵךְ אִיתָנִים, 1 Kings 8. 2. *the moneth of the Valiant*, because (say they) three great Prophets were born therein. But this <sup>c</sup> singular presence of mind, I conceive rather an effect of then a disposi-

d Maimon. de Idolat. c. 1. sec. 6.

c Mic. 3. 8.

Ila. 50. 7.

Ezek. 3. 9.

Act. 4. 13. 31.

tion



tion to the prophetick Spirit. (2.) *Power over inordinate affections*, for so *Maimonides* having asked (upon occasion of this Maxim) *who is the strong man?* makes answer *הַקּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת יָצָרוֹ*, *the man that subdues his concupiscence*; for herein the true strength and vigor of the Soul reports it self, that it can maintain its supremacy, and give check to all its rebel-passions: and therefore *ἐγκράτεια* (a word used in Scripture for temperance) signifies a having somewhat in ones power, and holding it within the compass of ones strength. All inordinate passions the *Jews* used to stile *the vails of the Prophets*, which intercepted the light of Prophecy, ready otherwise to fall upon them; and therefore rightly judged, a power over the motions of the lower Soul essential to the Prophetick State. (3.) *Singular gravity and severity of life and manners*: for in such a sence the word occurs, *2 Sam. 22. 26.* *עַם נָבוֹר* *with the strongly or heroically perfect, thou wilt shew thy self perfect.* And a late learned Papist conceives that the title of *נָבוֹרִים* *Gen. 6. 4.* was anciently the distinctive character of the Prophets; and that we are not there and in other places to understand (as we translate it) *Gyants*, fed *homines virtute & sanctitate ad miraculum usque potentes, & quasi Gyantes*: for which

f *Jacob. Bold,*  
de *Eccles. ante*  
leg. l. 1. c. 9.  
Pl. 18. 26.

which he gives several reasons. It hath been the acknowledged doctrine both of *Jews*, *Christians*, yea *Heathens*, that God never sets up a prophetick light but in golden candle-sticks, persons of most refined minds and maners. Amongst the Jews it obtained so much, that <sup>g</sup> *Maimonides* tells us that *hitherto there was never the man that would say that God did cause the Divine Majesty to dwell in a bad man, but then only when he had reformed his life*: nay so assur'd were they in this Doctrine, that the same Master tells us <sup>h</sup> elsewhere, that if a prophet arise and shew them a sign or a wonder, yet they believe him not, if not found to have walked *בדרך הנהגות קדושות*, in the waies of prophecy, in holiness and separation from the world, in the study of Wisdom, &c And as much was this doctrine subscribed unto by the *Christians*. <sup>i</sup> *Origen* takes notice that the Prophets God ever spake by, were eminent *διὰ τὸ τῷ βίῳ ἀσπίμῳ καὶ ἁγίῳ* *ἐκ ἐὺλογον*, for the inimitable sanctity and incomparable settledness of life and maners; and many more besides himself cited by a <sup>k</sup> *Modern* writer concerning Prophecy. And the very *Heathens* thought the Divine Majesty did so hate to touch any unclean thing, that the prophetick illapses could never grace an impure Soul. *Aristotle* (speaking of prophetick dreams) tells

<sup>g</sup> *Hucusque nemo adhuc fuit, qui dicere voluerit, Deum Majestatem suam Divinam habitare facere in viro malo, sed tunc demum si in melius ipsum prius converterit.*

*Maimon. Mor.*

*Nevoc. P. 2.*

*c. 32.*

<sup>h</sup> *De fundam.*

*leg. ch. 7. sec. 12*

*Vid. & Phil.*

*Fud. Quis rer.*

*div. heres.*

*il. 7. cont. Cels.*

*p. 336.*

<sup>k</sup> *Christ. à Ca-  
stro de Vati-  
cin. l. 3. c. 11.  
& 16.*

us to suppose, that they are ever sent from God, & *ἡ μὴ βλῆσται ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, δαίμων τοῦ αἵματος, ἀνθρώπου, and that he sends them not to the best and wisest of men, but indifferently and as it happens, is an absurd conceit: and therefore the wiser heathens prepared themselves for the reception of any divine communications by abstinencies, washings, some fantastical separations and sanctities; which proceeded upon a tacit sense of this truth, that the light of heaven cannot shine through dirt and filth, nor God ever make an unhallowed place or person, his Oracle. And if we consult Scripture, we shall find that howsoever the order of Kings by whom the Judicial, and of Priests by whom the Ceremonial law was administered; was maintained by a natural and hereditary succession of persons in the families of David and Aaron; yet the order of Prophets (by whose care the Moral law was especially secured) was alwaies elective: never any born Prophet of the Jews; but the office was served by such persons as God found qualified, generally with wisdom, always with piety. And therefore our Savior tells us we may know false Prophets <sup>m</sup> by their fruits: by some evil manners, or some doctrine which directly tends to encourage them. As for the instances of <sup>n</sup> Amos, Baalam and Caiaphas, which may be opposed*

De Divin. per  
Insom. c. 1. &  
Iamblic. de  
myst. Egypt.  
cap. cui. tit.  
inspirat. vacat.  
&c.

<sup>m</sup> Mat. 7. 15,  
16.

<sup>n</sup> Amos 7. 14.

to what hath been said, I shall return but this (for brevity's sake) that they are examples singular, and in their occasions extraordinary and therefore (like the jogging of young trees) do but more fully confirm and settle the rule they seem to shake.

Having thus fitted our prophetick balance, if we proceed now to weigh our pretending Prophets therein they will be found greatly wanting. For the greater part of our little Prophets, appear devoid of that natural wisdom, and soundness of mind of which the true prophets of God gave such undoubted evidences. That word *Madness* Prophets (deriving from *Μαδία* madness) carries in the Original thereof a remembrance what kind of crack'd mettall, the Ethnick Prophets of old were generally made of: and it derives a great suspicion upon our modern Prophets of some such crazy temper, that so great a part of these *ignes fatui* have risen from the boggs of the Romish cells and hermitages, where the strict separations from Company and honest business, the high applauses of an abstract and ecstasical devotion, the severe disciplines of the body by excessive fastings and scourgings, the strict forbidding of Marriage to persons not capable of that doctrine, the common Opinion of the frequent visits of the *V. Mary* and other Saints vouchsaf to more severe

o See a book  
intit. Admirable and notable  
Prophecies uttered by 24  
Roman Catholics. by  
James Maxwell. ed. 1615.

severe livers, together with a strong opinion of meriting, by such devout singularities, the highest favors and intimacies with God, cannot easily fall of intoxicating, weaker heads especially, with the conceit of some extraordinary visions and prophetick inspirations. Accordingly such swarms of prophets and rapturists have flown out of those hives in some ages, that the Council of Constance, Anno 1415. was conven'd (as *Gerson* tells us) especially to determine, *Tract. de Probatione Spir.* which should pass for Canonical and which for Apocryphal prophets in that Church: and the many gross fallacies put, even upon wise men, by such frequent Visionists, put him upon writing those learned and pious pieces extant in the collection of his works, *De probatione spirituum, De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis, De examine doctrinarum*, and that Epistle intitled *Doctrina ad quendam Eremitam*; in all which he doth with great Sobriety and Christian zeal advise against the spreading infection of those more *solemn and demerit freights*; Visions and pretended Prophecies. Nor perhaps will that term be thought a bolt let fly without aim, if the Reader consider further how frequent such prophetick visions and illapses are with these persons; Revelations usually are as familiar with them as Arguments with other men,



q Vid. Revel.  
Div. Epitom.

those three *Prophets*, *Kotternus*, *Christi-  
na*, and *Drabicius*, which of late years have  
made such a noise in *Germany* (as fruitful in  
Enthusiasts as *Africa* in monsters) had their  
weekly or daily Visions, and heard from  
God almost every day: and the Visions of  
any one of them may compare numbers with  
all that the prophetick writings make men-  
tion of. A consideration that will give us  
a great jealousy that the most of them were  
but the visions of a disturbed Fancy, and  
the spurious issues of that enchanting humor  
of Melancholy, which will present as many  
delusive images to a man as a conjurers glass.  
And perhaps, therefore did the holy Pro-  
phets record the year and the month when  
they received the divine illapses, that so  
their Visions and Prophecies might not be  
thought the fatal and therefore frequent  
workings of that black humor in them,  
but the arbitrary, and therefore oft interrup-  
ted, Visits of the true prophetick Spirit.

If we proceed next to make search into  
their acquired *Wisdom*, we shall soon per-  
ceive them greatly unworthy the title they  
assume: Is the hundredth part of them (as  
formerly) improved by any ingenuous edu-  
cation: are they not persons generally  
whose grossness and ignorance gives them a  
great confidence, credulity, and talkative-  
ness, three gifts of singular use to men of  
their

their profession; are they not silly women, S. Brigit, S. Hildegardis, S. Catherin Senensis, S. Teresa, S. Matild, S. Elizabeth, which are of greatest name for Prophecy in the Romish Church. Who were the men in the late times that most affected the Opinion of Prophecy and inspiration, but they which (like the <sup>r</sup> Lyon in sacred writ) would gladly tear God's learned Prophets in pieces; but had a kindness for the Afs: The Ebionites (a sort of ancient Enthusiasts) \* Eusebius tells took their name originally \* lib. i. c. x. from the Hebrew word *עֲבִיּוֹנִים* signifying poor, *עֲבִיּוֹנִים* *מֵחַוָּה* *מֵחַוָּה* *מֵחַוָּה* *מֵחַוָּה*, because of the poverty of their understanding: and \* Calvin speaking of the Enthusiasts of his time, saith of them, *ignari sunt supra quam dici possit*; and as vast as that number of pretenders to revelation was in Germany, (even 40000) the <sup>r</sup> Historian relates, *in tanta hominum colluvie, ne unus quidem inventus traditur qui literas didicerit: in* such a rout of people, the followers of their Prophet Muncer, not a man was found that could read; and of <sup>u</sup> David George (that famous new New-light of Germany in the last Age) 'tis recorded, that He was a man of little Learning, but of an extraordinary self-love. 'Tis only because the men are in the dark, that every rotten imagination shines to them and looks like Prophecy.

1 Kin. 13. 18

\* lib. i. c. x.

\* s. c. 4. cont. Libertin.

\* Sleid. Com-  
ment. l. 5.\* u. Erat David  
ille homo exi-  
guæ quidem  
peritiæ sed  
philantiæ ma-  
xima. Ulb. Em.  
l. de Spirit. Da-  
vid. Georg.

P. 47.

They are easily imposed upon by a busy fancy, because their undisciplin'd mind is unable to disabuse it self by an appeal to some sober and enduring principles;

And their Morals will appear as unworthy of the Prophetick dignity as their Intellectuals. Are they not persons generally discontented with the present state of things, and therefore clap the mantle of *Samuel* over the devil of Sedition, and disguise the wishes of or encouragements with some sudden change, in the sacred livery of a Prophecy? are they not persons generally extremely indigent and therefore have their eyes much upon the rewards of Divination? are they not persons commonly of a very morose and sour humor, especially where they perceive themselves neglected? is there any shadow of that unforc'd gravity, real sanctity, contempt of the profits and applauses of this world which made the faces of God's Prophets to shine before men? What indifferency to the Opinions of men discovers it self in them? How much the notices of men affect them, appears from the many *Ecce's* and *Selah's* they affix to their prophetick Speeches if ever they chance to hit. Whereas we may observe that howsoever there be a very critical notice taken in the Gospels how all the lines both of typical and verbal prophecy center

red in the person of our Savior, and how all were exactly fulfilled which referred to him (the more to assure our faith in so concerning an article as his being the true *Messiah*) yet there is so little intimation given *when* and *how* those other prophecies (in *Daniel* especially and the *Revelations*) of a more common and worldly reference, had their accomplishments, that there is scarce any argument wherein *Divines* more labor then in determining the places and seasons of them: and this, that God's Prophets might appear satisfied from themselves, and nothing solicitous about the Opinion of a vain man. But especially notorious shall we find these pretending Prophets for Sensuality and Sedition. The Gnosticks which arrogated such an intimacy with God stand branded with Sensuality and opposition to Magistrates, in Sacred writ. *Mahomet* was a most unclean and turbulent Prophet, the chief Doctrines taught and practiced by the *Munecrians* in Germany, were *Multiplicity of Wives*, and *No necessity of Magistracy*: and that false prophetess (whether person or Society) in the *Revelation* is called *Fazebel*, who was a very turbulent and a very lascivious Woman. Whereas when the true Spirit of Prophecy was poured out upon men in the Primitive times, it made them famous especially for purity, and a perfect submissi-

w Ep. S. Jud.  
ver. 10.  
2 Pet. 2. 10.

x Rev. 2. 20.

on to the most inhumane Magistrates.

To think now that the prophetic Spirit (if yet found in the world) balks all the more lively images of God therein, all those persons whose singular lives and learning were most likely to derive a reputation upon their message, and dwells with those which have scarce any thing of man, besides speech and figure, is to approach very near the judgment of the old Heathens, subscribed by *y Celsus*, that *bruit beasts were not only wiser than Man-kind, but more dear to God* in conceit easily pardonable to their *hypothesis*, that God conveyed the knowledge of futurities to man, through them. The Fathers thought it sufficient to reproach the faith of all the Ethnick Prophecies and Oracles, that they were delivered by persons notorious for nothing but the grossness of their minds or manners. It will here perhaps be opposed that very many modern Prophets have been persons of unstained lives, persons whose piety and prophecy reflected a mutual grace upon each other. To which I answer, That we scarce ever met with a false prophet in a Scripture but challenged for some enormity of life or doctrine, and therefore the Spirits which came out of the mouth of the False Prophet are well emblem'd by *b frogs*, which as they can only croake and make a noise, so they live in the mud,

γ Οὐ μόνον  
σοφώτερον  
τὰ ἄλογα  
ζῶον ἢ τὸ  
ἀνθρώπων  
φύσιν, ἀλλὰ  
καὶ θεοφιλέ-  
στερον. Orig.  
cont. Cels. l. 4.  
p. 227.  
2 Orig. cont.  
Cels. l. 7. p. 337

<sup>a</sup> Mic. 3. 5. 11.  
Ezec. 13. 22.  
<sup>2</sup> Pet. 2. 1, 2, 3.  
Mat. 7. 15.

<sup>b</sup> Rev. 16. 13.



mud, and are impure creatures. And as it was then, so it is generally now. *Paracelsus* (several of whose Prophecies are extant) was a walking Dunghil (so offensive and corrupt his life) if a story do not misreport him.

*St. Julianus* (the Italian Prophet) was condemned, by the Senate of Florence, to the fire, for raising Seditions in the State. *Drac*

*hicus* (so much the discourse of late) was excommunicate for his scandalous manners not long before he fell a prophesying. As

for the Piety of the rest, it usually keeps pace with their Prophecy, being as fantastical as that, consisting in some pathetic

Prayers, vehement expressions, bodily severities, affected anomalies and aversions from the innocent usages of men, not in a profound

Humility and universal Charity! But if any of these persons were so really religious as it is pretended, I cannot weaken their title to

Prophecy by this first Consideration, but may possibly effect it by some that shall succeed.

*G*

*CHAP.*

*c V. Hornbeck de Weigelian. d Cominaus de Bel. Neapol.*

*l. 5. e Vis. Drabic. Histor. per*

*F. A. C. p. 131.*

**CHAR. H.T.**

Vulgar Prophecies proved vain from the intricate circumstances of them.

Several circumstances in the matter and style of those Prophecies intimated in, which break them unworthy of God. Their being generally delivered in numbers noted as a character of Vanity, and why. The Devil's Oracles of old detected usually in Verse. Why afterwards in more natural and familiar forms. Tully's exception against the pretended Oracles of the Sibyls justified. What appearance of Poetry in the Prophetic Writings. These Prophecies noted to be delivered without any or a very long time prefixed for their accomplishment: Useless upon this account to any good end. Why Scripture-Prophecies may be allowed a long time to be accomplished in but non-Vulgar. The Devil concluded to influence these Vulgar Prophecies, and therefore not to be credited.

**O**ur second Consideration, to evince  
the Vanity of these petty Quarrels,

**Considerat. 2.**

is this: *Their very shape and character speak them greatly unworthy of God, who alone is able to declare the things that are to come.* For \* they seem not at all level'd (what was noted of old of all the Devil's Predictions) *ἡμεῖς ἡ ἐκπομπὴ ἡ ἀνακρίσις ἡ ἐπίταξις καὶ ἡ διορθωσις τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων, to the bettering and correction of mens lives and manners,* but rather to Curiosity and Sedition in the State. \* God is seldom owned in them as the Author of the Evils foretold, nor Repentance as the remedy. \* They frequently betray men (by some ambiguous expression)

f Orig. l. 7.  
cont. Celf.

expression) to the Evils they seem to warn them of. \* They commonly come forth, and are most attended to in times of action and expectation, and therefore most likely to be then invented. \* They are generally found (as lines drawn by no rule) to cross and thwart one another. \* The stile they are delivered in, commonly wears the Devil's livery, being so full of darkness and perplexity, that it may serve to any interpretation. \* The knowledg they pretend to give, is profitable to no great end, whereas all the gifts of the Spirit are bestowed <sup>1 Cor. 12. 7.</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>to</sup> some common benefit. \* They are generally delivered in such affected barbarisms, halting meeter, fantastical pictures and emblems, which carry nothing of that grace and majesty which attends the breathings of the true Spirit of Prophecy in Scripture. \* Events are oft foretold in them, without those circumstances of time, place, persons, and the like, which might assure the Events to be as well foreseen as foretold when they come to pass. \* The matters foretold in them are cheap and trivial, and such as it were infinitely better for men not to know. \* The pretended Visions, often monstrous beyond the fictions of *Bedlam*, the stile fluttering and uneven, like the heated spirits which conduct it. In short, Let but any wise man read over the Prophecies of Scripture,

ture, and then those of *Merlin* or *Nessre-dame*, and I believe he will scarce need an Argument to perswade him that they were never both inspired by the same Spirit.

But there are two things of more especial note in these Vulgar Prophecies, which are the Characters of Vanity: (1.) *Those Poetical numbers in which they are frequently delivered*. For whereas all the great Prophets of God delivered themselves in a natural and unforc'd order of words, the far greater part of these pretended Oracles of elder and later times are delivered in Verse, the better to inchant the fancies of the people, and to become observable; for an Oracle in Verse at once commands and courts the Soul to a regard thereof. The Devil's Oracles of old were so generally clothed in numbers, and those enamel'd with all the curiosities of art, that when they became about the times of *Plutarch* more familiar and simple, it was so much observed, that he wrote a Discourse upon the occasion, intitl'd *Ὅτι ἡ Πυθία οὐκ ἔτι νῦν ὡς ἑρηνότα ἔχεν ποίησιν*, *Why the Pythia doth not now as heretofore use Poetry in her Oracular Speeches*. To satisfy which Question, among other things, he tells his Reader, That God had now removed from his Oracles, Poetry, and variety of dialect, and circumlocution, and obscurity, and ordered them to speak to those which consult them,

ἡ θεὸς ἀρε-  
λὼν ἤ χεῖν-  
μῶν ἐπὶ καὶ  
γλώσσῃ καὶ  
πειθεσίν,  
καὶ ἀπαφειαν,  
ἥτις διὰ τὴν  
ἀσέβειαν καὶ  
ἀσεβοῦς καὶ  
ἀσεβοῦς.

as Kings to their People; and Masters to their Scholars, in language intelligible and perswasive. But this rather shews the knot then unties it. The true Reason of this change of language was (I conceive) either because men began to suspect that where there was so much of man appearing in the Oracle there could not be much of God, and that Inspiration is too hot and active a thing to move the sober and cool pace of a Poem: or else because the tempers of men were grown more sedate, their minds & discourses nor so turgent and ecstasical as heretofore; or because he saw the clouds began to break, and God addrest him to men in more natural and familiar ways, and therefore the Devil (who would never be out of fashion) came nearer to the minds of men, and laid aside the state and solemnity he formerly spake to them with. Or perhaps because the true Oracles of God, delivered in more easie and neglected language, began to lie more exposed to the common view, and he would not have his to differ from them, but to imitate them. There is that coolness and curiousness in a Verse, which speaks it greatly unsuitable to the vehemence and seriousness of the Prophetick Spirit. It useth to beget transports of mind, which cannot bear the slowness and nicety of a Poem: for, as common and quotidian thoughts are beneath



i Tull. de div.  
l. 2.

k Amyrald.  
Dissertat. de  
Trinit.

neath the grace of a Verse; so great and  
vehement are above the strains thereof,  
they are impatient of borrowing fees, that  
are fit to fly. And therefore Tully censures  
this judicious exception against the *Oracles*  
Oracles of his time, that they were deli-  
vered in Verses, and many of those *Acro-*  
*sticks*, and carried the evident tokens of  
art and contrivance; and therefore (saith  
he) *magis artis & diligentia erant, quam in-*  
*citationis & motus*, they were rather the  
issue of *Art and diligence*, then *Enthusiasm*  
and *divine motion*. Nor is the Exception  
entred by a late learned Writer against this  
Exception of Tully, That the Book of Job is  
*Poetical*, and some of the Psalms *Acrosticks*,  
of any great moment; those writings being  
inspired by *the Holy Ghost* (as the  
*Jews* distinguish) a more gentle and easie  
*afflatus*, that was still and sedate, and ap-  
proach'd very near to the more rational and  
divine actings of a well-disposed mind.  
Whereas the motions of the Prophetick  
Spirit (strictly so called) are quick and vehe-  
ment, and such as the flow feet of a Verse  
cannot hold pace withal. And as for the  
Poetry in those Books, it is rather in the  
phrase and matter of them than in the mea-  
sure. For if there be any set numbers obser-  
ved in them, they are generally so mysteri-  
ously couch'd that none of the learned have  
been

been able yet to make any certain report of them. And therefore, upon this score, I should make no great doubt to throw out the vast rabble of rhyming, clinching, versing Prophets, as persons that tell the worst lies in the best manner.

Another thing which proclaims the Vanity of these Vulgar Prophecies, is, *the circumstance of time with which they are generally delivered*: For either they prefix no time at all, or a very long period thereof to be accomplish'd in, whereby they can minister neither to the honor of God nor the good of man. For they can give no testimony to his Providence or Prescience, because they will be thought to be fulfilled by chance, or the Prophecy (because long ago delivered) will be forgotten, and the Event, when it comes, be thought to have stood in no relation at all to the Prophecy; and therefore it may perhaps, by the singularity thereof, beget wonder in men, but not piety. Nor can any man be warned by them to avoid an Evil, which may come (for ought he knows) not till his head be laid; nor can they give check to the sins of the time, for men will be ready to say, like the scornfuls in the Prophet, *The days are prolonged, and every Vision faileth.* Nor (if the Prophecy fail) shall the Prophet be alive to bear the shame of his impostures. The condition of those Prophecies

Ezek. 12. 22.

phesies in sacred Writ, which take Ages to be accomplish'd in, is quite different, for they stand perpetuated in Scripture, and therefore fall under the daily notices of men, so that when the Events foretold come to pass, they may readily be compared with the Prophecies, which, the more ancient date, they bear, the more wonderful will they appear when accomplish'd, and the more full reports will they make of their divine Original, and of the Scripture wherein they are found. For there is nothing doth so seal the Faith of the divine Inspiration of Scripture, as the various Predictions therein, delivered at such distant times and places, exactly accomplish'd in their seasons. But these Vulgar Prophecies are either not delivered to writing at all, or the writings forgotten, or look'd into but by a few curious persons, and therefore easily altered and varied (as the Prophecies of *Merlin* have been) as might suit occasions, or mens humors. Besides, though even those Scripture-Prophecies, which are of a more catholick concern (as those relating to the *Messiah* and his Kingdom) received a slow accomplishment, yet the Prophecies of a more confined reference did not use to go long before they were delivered of the Evils they were pregnant with, <sup>m</sup> especially after men grew so wicked as to deride the patience of

<sup>m</sup> See Ezek.  
12. 22, 23, 24,  
25.

of God, and to think they lived the longer for being threatened by his Prophets.

From all this it appears, in a great degree of probability, that the Father of Lies gave being to very many of these spurious Prophecies, that by these false he might derive a suspicion upon the true ones, or abuse the minds of men with vain hopes, panick fears, or curious impertinences. And will any man, that owns his Savior for his Prophet, receive the Devil for his Oracle? or when he is sick of things present, go to the God of Ekran (by attending to any Prophecy of his incitation) for quiet and resolution? Shall we value our Faith at so cheap a rate as to trust it with the Oracles of the Father of Lies? Can the Devil be presumed able to give us true resolutions to any questions concerning the future? (Did God ever make him of his Council, or deliver Times and Seasons into his power?) or willing, if able, to do it with any fair and single intentions? Have the beams of the Sun of Righteousness put out all the fires on his Altars, the Glory and Power of the Divine Oracles and Miracles spoiled his great trade of lying Oracles and Wonders, and shall our easiness and vanity encourage him to drive this more secret and little trade of Prophecies and Prodigies? Certainly that man is strangely desirous of news that will go to the Devil for intelligence.

Isai. 41. 23.  
chap. 44. 7.

## CHAPTER IV

*The vanity of these Prophecies evinc'd by  
their coming unattended with Signs.*

The difference between a Sign and a wonder. Of what kind of Prophets no Sign was to be required. What method the Jews observed in the trial of Prophets. Miracles not a Sign required of all Prophets. Six Prophetical Signs taken notice of. Our Saviour's Prophecy confirmed by them all. Signs of the Prophet and of the Prophecy. None of these Vulgar Prophets give a Sign. Their pretended Sufficiency insufficient Sign. Their admired gift of Prayer of as little credit as that. Natural and how effectual to enable the power of speaking freely on the sudden: that confirmed by the example of the ancient Roman Orators. Quintilian. Delius. Abius. &c. What? Why some men fluently before company. The great efficacy of exalted imagination to assist an extemporary Rhetorick. Why vehement speeches so mighty in men. What kind of heats commendable in Rhetorick. The powerful impression of these Prophecies no sign of their Divinity. Divine impression nor distinguishable solely by their power and evidence, asserted against some Jewish Rabbins. Artemidorus. Some accomplished Predictions, no safe Sign of the inspiration of our modern Prophets.

**T**HE Vanity of receiving these Prophecies as the certain indications of any future Event further appears from hence; The Deliverers of them shew neither Sign nor Wonder to derive authority upon their persons and prophecies. Signs and Wonders so often coupled together, & sometimes used indifferently in the Writings of the Old and New Testament, are not alway the same thing, every

Wonder

Confid. 3.



Wonder or Miracle being indeed a Sign, and so often stiled; But every Sign is not (if we speak accurately) a Miracle. For *neque* a Miracle, is some mighty work transcendent to the powers and capacities of natural Agents, but *o* *σημειον* a Sign, is any extraordinary indication, besides, sufficient to make faith of the real inspiration of the person who pretends to speak from God.

*o* And so *Eu-*  
*stathius* seems

to distin-

guish, saying,

Εστὶ δὲ χη

τὸν παλαιόν,

σημειον μὲν τὸ

ἐν τῷ νόμῳ, ἡ

ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.

*σημειον δὲ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τὸ πολὺ γινόμενον περὶ δὲ τὸ πνευματικόν ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ οὐσιν.*

Now all persons that pretended of old to speak immediately from God, came attested with some Sign or Wonder, except they only called men to obedience to some acknowledged Precept in the Law of *Moses*:

for then (as *P. Grotius*, I think, truly notes)

no Sign or Wonder was required of them,

because the condition of that Oeconomy,

in which God had promised and the people

more wanted such extraordinary Teachers,

was a competent security to their Faith,

that they were not imposed upon by any

such pretender, especially if the forementi-

oned prophetick qualifications were found

about him. But if the inspired man required

them to a faith of some Prediction or Do-

ctrine, really or in appearance, new, he came

always authorized by some divine Sign or

Wonder. It is therefore a Maxim with the

*p* Notandum  
est hoc, ab eo

Prophetâ qui

tantumhorta-

tur ad implen-

da legis jussa,

nulla signa re-

quiri. Grot.

Not. in Deut.

18. 22.

q Maimonid.  
de Fundam.  
Leg. c. 7. lect.  
11.

r Mat 12. 38.  
Luke 11. 29.  
Mat. 16. 1.  
Luke 23. 8.

s Singularem  
signi (quod  
σημεῖον ἔστι  
מִלָּא vo-  
cant) in Pro-  
phetis dijudi-  
candis rationē  
haberi, apud  
Judæos, tum ē  
sacris literis  
tum ē Magi-  
strorum do-  
ctrinā disci-  
mus. Selden.  
de Synedr. l. 3.  
c. 6.  
u Mat. 24. 24.  
Rev. 16. 13, 14  
2 Thes. 2. 9.  
Deut. 13. 1.  
Act. 13. 6.

Masters, that when ever God sends a Pro-  
phet to a People, **מַלְאָכִים יִשְׁלַח**  
he gives him a Sign or a Wonder that the  
people may know God hath truly sent him.

Accordingly we meet with the Jews often  
demanding a Sign of our Savior as the Seal  
of his divine Mission and Prophecy; and  
what a singular respect they had to some  
Sign in the trial of Prophets, may appear  
as from the sacred, so also, from the Jewish  
monuments. In consideration whereof, all  
the Impostors anciently, which usurp'd the  
title of Prophets, pretended to Signs, with-  
out which counterfeit Seal they and their  
Doctrine could never have past unsuspected  
among the people: and the better to ape a  
Miracle, most of those pretenders to Enthu-  
siasm among the Jews, Christians, and Hea-  
thens, were Magicians, as might be made ap-  
pear were it here pertinent. He that was  
Truth it self was content to borrow credit  
and authority (before men) to his Prophecy,  
from Signs and Wonders, Act. 2. p. 2.

Now Miracles were generally reserved to  
seal the person and message of such inspired  
persons as were to introduce a way of Wor-  
ship, in truth or common Opinion, new: and  
therefore were never wrought (familiarily at  
least) but by Moses the Deliverer, Elijah  
and Elisha the Restorers, and our Savior the  
Fulfiller and Finisher of the Law, and his  
Disciples,

Disciples, the Preachers of a Gospel which was a novel Doctrine in the opinion of men at that time. Scarce any Prophet was *ἑρμηνεύων ἐν ῥαῖς ἀποκρίσεις, a worker of Paradoxes* (as Josephus saith of our Savior) but he that was a Preacher of them. But however, all the Heralds of Heaven had the badg of some divine Signs, whereby unpossess minds might easily distinguish them from Impostors. Of these, it will suffice to my present purpose briefly to point to some few, which the Ages, to which Prophecy was promised, seem to have made the greatest reckoning of.

As (1.) *The discovery of some present matter, evidently out of the compass of all humane knowledg*: as the secrets of the heart, the counsels of the bed-chamber, matters done at distance and with all possible secrecy, and the like. Such wonderful discoveries were of great consideration with the people (in that time to which God had promised Prophecy) to assure the divine Mission of the Prophets: accordingly our Savior was frequent in the use of such divine Signs, and so were the other Prophets it is likely: and therefore the Jews, which looked upon our Savior but as a Mock-Prophet, required him to a discovery of a Mock-Secret, the person who smote him on the face while he was blindfolded; the

w Ad. 17. 19.

x Joh. 4. 17, 18, 19.

1 Cor. 14. 25.

y Mat. 21. 27. Luk. 22. 12, 13

11. 17.

24. 38.

z 2 King. 6. 12

2 Sam. 12. 12.

a Luk. 22. 64.

revealing whereof they called Prophecy, the discovery of such kind of Secrets being received as the Seals of a Prophetick Spirit.

b Non ex solo  
successu, verbis  
respondere  
cognosci. Pro  
pheta potest,  
non successu  
multas addi  
dere circum  
stantias quas  
nulla humana  
prudencia pro  
spicere possit.  
Grot. Not. in  
Deut. 18. 22.  
c 1 Sam. 3. 19,  
20, and 9. 6.  
d Ezek. 33. 33  
Jer. 28. 9.

(2.) The constant coming to pass of Events foretold in very critical and contingent circumstances. Many things the Prophets foretold to fall out within the compass of a few months or days, that so their Prophecies of a longer time might have the greater credit, and men might quickly understand that they were established Prophets of the Lord. Thus it is said, they knew Samuel to be, when they saw none of his prophetick words to fall to the ground: and Ezekiel having delivered his Prediction, adds, *And when this cometh to pass, then shall they know that a Prophet hath been among them.* And God himself, in the trial of Prophets, appointed the Jews to look to the issues of their Predictions, Deut. 18. 21, 22. Upon which Text, e Maimonides lets fall this gloss: *Cum quis, ipsum munus propheticum sibi vendicaverit, dicemus ei, ede nobis promissa, & refer nobis aliqua eorum quae nota fecit tibi Dominus; quo referente, si vera evaserint promissa ejus omnia, hinc prophetia ejus veritatem percipiemus. Quod si in aliqua ipsorum, vel minutissimo, mendax fuerit, hinc mendacem eum esse cognoscemus. Atque hac est expressa legis de hujusmodi probatione sententia.* So that it seems probable that the Jews re-

e Maimonid.  
Praefat. in  
sed. Zer. 2  
vers. D. Po-  
cock, p. 19.

quired

quired but the Sign of some accomplish'd Prediction (not always a Miracle) from the more common sort of Prophets: and therefore some derive the Hebrew word **וָיָא** Sign, from **וָיָא** venit, because the most frequent Sign of Prophecy the Prophets gave, and the people required, was the coming to pass of some Prediction, delivered in such circumstances as no Eye of humane prudence could possibly foresee. (3.) Some gifts and abilities extraordinary gotten suddenly and without humane industry, and abiding with them, (for many possess persons have for some time<sup>n</sup> spoken languages, and made shew of singular abilities to discredit this prophetick Sign,) as to deliver himself *ex tempore* in very weighty sentences, to sing praises to God with singular art and dexterity upon the place, to interpret Scripture with great evidence of truth. All which were comprized by the Jewish Doctors, in that degree of Prophecy they stiled (for distinction's sake) *Spiritus Sanctus*. This prophetick Sign our Savior and his Followers did seal the truth of their Enthusiasm withal, as other Ancient Prophets had done before them. It is God onely that can make his way to the Soul immediately, and seal it with the abiding characters of Wisdom. (4.) The attestation of some Person of whose Prophetick Spirit there is no question: According

f **וָיָא**  
Gerundenſis  
derivat ab  
**וָיָא** venit  
quoniam ven-  
turum aliquod  
ſignificat, ut  
ſi dixerō, Ego  
ſum Propheta  
verus & De-  
miſſus, &c. hoc  
erit vobis ſig-  
num, utas ve-  
niet tacitaſt:  
aſellus &  
bruchm. Deut.  
in Deut. 18.  
g 2 King. 7. 18  
Jer. 28. 16, 17  
Mat. 26. 34.  
h Vid. Pſel.  
ſei cyp̄y.  
Δαν. & f.  
Poſſ. de Idol.  
l. 3. c. 44.  
p 969.  
i Raymund.  
Pud. Fid.  
p. 99.  
k Jo. 7. 15, 16.  
l Act. 4. 13.  
1 Cor. 12. 10.



in Maimonid.  
Fund. leg.  
c. 10. sect. 9.

Deut. 31. 7.  
Josh. 1. 17.

o Omnis vates  
qui surrexit  
locutus est de  
Prophetis so-  
cii sui. Voss.  
in Maim. de  
fund. leg. c. 10.  
p 2 King. 3.  
11, 12.  
q Joh. 5. 32.  
7 Luk. 10. 6.

Pla. 99. 6. 7.  
Job 38. 1. 2.  
Exod. 24. 16.

Num. 12. 6.

According to that Maxim of the Masters,  
וְיִיחָדוּתָם מִיָּדוּתָם מִיָּדוּתָם מִיָּדוּתָם  
Prophet of whom some other undoubted Pro-  
phet witnesseth that he is a Prophet, is assured-  
ly a Prophet. Accordingly they note that  
the testimony of <sup>n</sup> Moses to the divine Mis-  
sion of Joshua procured him the Faith of the  
People before his conduct was credited from  
Heaven by any Miracle. Which rule I take  
to have a truth therein, though I demur up-  
on that other they sometimes superadd to  
it, <sup>o</sup> Every Prophet which arose, spake in testi-  
mony of his companion in Prophecy. It is  
likely some P did. And therefore perhaps  
would our Savior have his Prophecy attest-  
ed by <sup>q</sup> John the Baptist (generally reputed  
a Prophet by the people) that so this, as  
well as all other prophetick Signs, which  
ever singly and apart derived credit upon  
the person and message of any other inferior  
Prophet, might conspire in the Person and  
Prophecy of him the great Prophet of his  
Church. (5.) The immediate voice of God  
from Heaven to him, before witnesses, was  
another Sign of a Prophet: in ancient times,  
especially before the building of the Taber-  
nacle: but when Prophecy became more  
common, God chose to speak to holy men  
by Dreams and Visions: and perhaps the  
ceasing of that more usual way of divine  
Manifestation under the second Temple,  
might

might occasion some to think he might possibly return to the more ancient way of revealing himself, by a *Bath Kol*, a voice from heaven. However, with this also Sign God dignified our Savior. (6.) The general prevalence of their prayers, especially in matters of a more publick reference, was a very probable sign of true Prophets anciently. God assigns this as the Characteristick note, between false and true Prophets, that one had great interest and power in the Court of heaven, and the other none at all. *But if they be Prophets, and if the word of the Lord be with them, let them now make intercession to the Lord of Hosts, &c.* This was a sign of a Prophet, because it was a sign he prayed by a special instinct from God; whereby he knew what blessings God was ready to bestow; and besides, it was a sign of that singular favor he had with God: and therefore we shall find an high value set upon the prayers of a Prophet both by God and men, <sup>x</sup> in Scripture. And perhaps in confidence of the <sup>y</sup> prevalence of his prayers, some people that held our Savior for a great Prophet though not the *Messiah*, brought their young children to him that he might lay his hands upon them and pray, *Matth. 19. 13.* This prophetick sign also attested the Prophecy of our Bl. Savior, *Joh. 11. 42.*

*2 Pet. 1. 17.  
Joh. 12. 28.*

*Jer. 29. 28.  
Ezek. 13. 4, 7.*

*x Gen. 20. 7.  
1 Sam. 7. 5.  
Deut. 9. 18.  
20. 26.  
2 King. 2. 12.  
Mat. 18. 19.*

*y Observandū  
est Prophetarū  
preces esse effi-  
caces, luri-  
mum conferre  
ad vitam, si*

*pre aliquo preces ad Deum fuderint. Procop. com. in Gen. 20. 7.*

These

These were some of those more general signs which gave testimony to the Divine Mission of a Prophet: but besides these, there were also frequently added some particular signs of the truth of this or that extraordinary prediction; especially if of some matter of greater import, of the truth whereof it was somewhat necessary the people should have a full assurance: the instances whereof are of familiar occurrence <sup>2</sup> in the Book of God, and therefore the Disciples, when our Savior had foretold an Event so great, as the destruction of *Jerusalem* and the Temple, demanded of him a sign both of the truth and time of the accomplishment of that Prophecy. <sup>2</sup> *Master when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when all these things shall come to pass?* These particular and almost present signs, gave assurance that the Prophet did not deliver conjectures but Prophecies, and the doubling thus of his Prophecy was a sign that the thing was certain with God, and not foretold conditionally onely, (as judgments and blessings often were) and that the agreement between the Prediction and the Event when coming to pass, was not a chance but a Providence. So that these were more immediately the signs of the Prophecy, as the other six of the Prophet.

From all this, it seems more then probable

<sup>2</sup> II. 32.7.

Jer. 44. 29.

<sup>1</sup> Sam. 2. 34.

<sup>1</sup> King. 13. 2, 3

<sup>2</sup> King. 20. 8.

<sup>1</sup> Sam. 2. 1, 2, 3

<sup>2</sup> Luke 21. 7.

able, that all true Prophets came distinguished by some divine sign, although it appear not now from Scripture, what particular sign it was which gave credit to each Prophet therein mentioned; and that anciently Men were wiser then to let every prophecy pass currant, as soon as ever it had the image of the King of heaven stampt upon it, carryed the face of an inspiration from God. Men then understood Prophecy, upon many accounts, too much exposed to suspicion of imposture to be credited upon the single testimony of every zealous pretender thereunto: and therefore all Prophets though they came not recommended by equal testimony (the occasions they were to serve not being of equal moment) yet still with what might suffice to place their divine Mission beyond a question. Some were attested by Wonders, some by signs, some by both. If then (to apply all this to the occasion) Men would once be so advised as to demand some such divine sign as used heretofore to credit the Prophetick function of these pretended Prophets, they would certainly all sneak away like Juglers when called to shew a Miracle. What have they generally beyond Ordinary besides ignorance and confidence? What Miracle or Sign doth God bear witness to their Mission by? what have all the great *swelling words* of Enthu-

Enthusiasts been at last delivered of, beside the crude air of some flatulent imagination: have they, after all the noise they have made, blest the world with the discovery of any useful secret in Philosophy or Divinity: are not Scripture prophecies as dark, diseases as desperate, nature vail'd as much now as in former Ages: do not all their books (like the barren fig-tree) bear *leaves only*, a few rampant Metaphors, and some higher straines of prophetick Scripture, jumbled together like the images of a dream: shall we then appear so unworthy of the title we carry as to think a few extatical looks and Scripture phrases sufficient to intitle a man to the Opinion of *רבי משה* *a Master of light?* as the Jews use to stile a Prophet: It is not to be imagined that God would send Prophecy into the world, and not have it regarded, or that it can be regarded, if it come attended with nothing whereby it can be known. When the Apostles had such an extraordinary measure of the Spirit, there was *φανέρωσις πνεύματος*, *a manifestation of the Spirit*; as the extraordinary Measure of the Spirit then poured out gave testimony to the Gospel, so the mighty signs and wonders which attended it gave testimony to the Spirit.

c Gal. 3. 2.

To all this, I know, it will be opposed that many of these modern Prophets come

atten-



attended with signs sufficient to the man who is of an humble and teachable temper, whom alone God seeks to satisfy: viz. these four; *Eminent Sanctity. A very liberal and powerful gift of Prayer. The mighty energy and impression of their Visions and Prophecies. The accomplishment of very many of their predictions.* To all which I shall return a few words.

First, We are told that they are persons of *very eminent Sanctity*, that are wholly abstract from the pleasures and honors of this world, and have no fleshly relishes appearing in them, and therefore 'tis most unlikely that they would deceive others or should be deceived themselves by a false Prophecy. To which I answer, There is nothing more misjudged then Sanctity, 'tis too commonly thought to stand in some more solemn looks at a Sacrament, in visiting of an holy shrine, in some extatical devotions, in the use of some interpreting garbs, faces and Phrases, in caressing of Christ by some pretty attributes, in declaiming with much zeal against some odious names, heresie, Antichrist and Superstition, in carrying it very morosely towards men of a different form from ones self, in some severer disciplines and neglects of the body: and therefore 'tis unsafe trusting our faith with a prophecy upon a report of the sanctity of the Prophet. Besides, no  
men

men more subject to such delusions, then men of devout affections; if of strong fancies, impulsive tempers, and weak intellectuals; for in such persons, an indiscreet use of Religion by very pensive and solemn thoughts, affected retirements and Silences, too intense Meditations, continual fervors, and endeavored heats, unreasonable fastings and watchings, the neglect of innocent diversions and relaxations, especially if joyn'd with the continual study of some dark prophecies and visions in Scripture (more proper entertainments for Men of great learning) can not easily fail of intoxicating the mind with wild and extravagant imaginations. This overstraining of them by such intense detractions and perpetual fervors, hath produced so many crack'd brains, pretended Prophets and visionists in the Religious Houses of the *Romish Church*; who is yet so ill advised as to cite them as the proofs of that prophetick Spirit the laies claim unto. Moreover, It hath ever been the Policy of the Devil to do the Church the greatest Mischief by men of greatest name for Religion. He knows good men are soonest decoyed by those which seem of a feather with themselves, and that error will sooner be entertained from a pious then truth from a profane person. And therefore the first among the four things which they fly de-

*d De multis in religione & austeritate vitæ constitutis, incredibilia fere sunt quæ adonch testibus referentibus audiui.*

*Gerf. de dist. Ver. Vil. à fals.*

stroy the worldly number, *A Religious man that is a Fool*. God perhaps permits it thus to be, that men might learn to make him only *Lord* of their Faith; and not to give an absolute trust (his due alone) to the wisest or best of Men. Good men are no more exempt from mistakes and lunacies, then they are from a seaver or the infirmities of Age.

But we are further told that many of these prophetick Persons are sealed by the singular gift of praying in the Holy Ghost. Their lips seem touch'd by a coal from the altar, so fervent and so Scripture-like are the expressions they bespeak God withall upon the suddain. Nature useth to be eloquent indeed in its own concerns, but lips and is a child in the things of heaven, useth to speak to God in language of ice, words that freeze and even dy between the lips, and besides, where words come without forcing, and sit handsomely about the matter, *datatur in illa hora*, 'tis (surely) not they which speak but the Holy Ghost which speaketh in them. Nature seems not sufficient for such singular performances upon the place. Moreover, their words (like arrows pointed and fired) make a very deep and abiding impression upon the hearts of the hearers, the Souls of men become half unbodied, while they hang upon the lips of these extraordinary

extraordinary persons; and therefore surely  
*non vobis hominibus sonat*; there is more in  
 these words then the voice of a Man, and  
 the charms of a little fervent and Patheti-  
 cal language. *Enolsu uou* I answer, This devout *ardor* with the  
 effects consequent thereunto, doth ex-  
 tremely incline the minds of men with great  
 Opinions of the Men in whom it appears;  
 and is readily received (like the divine fire  
 that came down upon the Sacrifice) as the  
 testimony of God to the person and to all  
 he offers. David George obtained the re-  
 pute of a Prophet chiefly *assiduo ac arden-*  
*ti in speciem preces ad Deum fundenda stu-*  
*dio*. Whereas all these strange *phenomena*  
 may be salved by meer mechanical prin-  
 ciples, all generally being but the issue of a  
 natural pregnancy and *feruor* of temper,  
 exerting it self in fluent words tinged  
 with religion and Scripture phrases. Where  
 there is *naturalis quidam animi mobilitas*  
 (which Quintilian requires in order to speak-  
 ing well *ex tempore*) a natural *moveabili-*  
*tas* of Soul, whereby it is inabled to turn  
 it self nimbly and with ease to new  
 thoughts and words, and this assisted (or  
 rather created) by some more brisk and  
 active spirits, it may equal, perhaps exceed  
 the performances of more advised thoughts.  
 A moderate heat, wherein all the Spirits  
 flow

e Spanhem.de  
 Orig. Anabap.  
 sec. 24.

flow to their proper principles and fountains, the vital to the heart, and the animal to the brain, and are put into quick but manageable motions, doth raise in a man a more fine and exquisite power of perception, and cause the images of things to appear more distinct, and to come faster upon his mind, then otherwise they would, and by consequence make the Understanding more pregnant, and the expressions more fluent and easy. And therefore when the Orators of old attributed their more fortunate performances and rhetorical enlargements in their *extempore* declamations before the people, (then much in use) to the special assistance and incitation of God; *Quintilian* judiciously, gives them to the present heat and fermentation of spirits, the great instruments whereby the Soul performs all its works in this embodied state. His words are these, *Si quem calor ac Spiritus tulit, frequenter accidit, ut successum extemporalem consequi cura non possit; Deum tunc adfuisse, Veteres Oratores aiebant, sed ratio manifesta est: nam bene concepti affectus & recentes rerum imagines continuo impetu feruntur, quæ nonnunquam mora styli refrigescunt, & dilata non revertuntur.* Which words I shall dismiss untranslated, lest (like liquors put into another vessel) they should contract a flatness and loose Spirits.

*f. Inst. Orat. l. 10. c. 7.*



g V. Francif.  
Ferr. de Ac-  
clamationib.  
Vet. l. 3. c. 14.

Now these words of *Quintilian* give a good account of the *extempore* felicities of the Orators of those times, which themselves had such great thoughts of, that *Σείως λέγειν* to speak divinely or by inspiration was the usual phrase whereby they exprest speaking fluently, pathetically and with coherence, without more thoughts then just ushered the words they spake. And that Spirit which generally inspires our Divine Orators and makes them run over with such winning rhetorick, is much of kind with that which incited those civil ones; viz. a natural fervor of temper, excited by some superficial affection, and assisted by a plenty of fit expressions made familiar to them by study and custom. For we find men of very evil lives *Ignatius*, *Hacket*, and others eminent for this religious Rhetorick and fervor; and many of these Orators have confessed themselves greatly *strained* and *bound up* (as the phrase is) when in their closets, who are carried with full sails when to act before a Company; because desire of Opinion makes them more concerned, excites affection, and consequently that ardor so essential to a smooth performance. They are (in the Phrase of *Plato*) *δραῖσιν μεσολύful of the Theater*,

i Interdum fi-  
ebat ut preces  
inter & sacri-  
ficia, tantis  
ardoribus a-  
stuarer, ut om-  
nes partes cor-  
poris exarde-  
scent, facies  
instar purpu-  
rae ruberet,  
&c. Vit. &  
glor. S. Ignat.  
per. Anon. c. 9.  
k Dr. Casaub.  
Enthus. m. p.  
214.

l Extempora-  
lis actio auditorum frequentia ut miles concentu signorum excitatur, secundos  
imperus augeat placendi cupido, vel opinio. *Quintil. 10. c. 7.*

are touched with applause, and therefore act to the height of themselves in publick, but are cold and indifferent where the breath of man is wanting to excite and blow them up.

Now our admired Prophets having this natural fervor and pregnancy of Spirit to wing their Fancies, and this heat intended by the new forces of an *artificer* (as *Longinus* stiles the Earthy vapor which inspired the *Pythia*) an enthusiastick vapor of heated Melancholy arising from the *hypochondria*, it cannot fail of displaying it self in such rapturous and lofty strains of divine rhetoric; as shall be verily thought to flow *me vena Israelis*, from the same Divine Spirit which inspired the Prophets: when the persons are but heightened by a fume somewhat more gross and unruly then that which inspires our common Poets, whose more happy heats and sprucer fancies have been thought the issue of borrowed Spirits, and therefore the blood of the grape been generally vouched by them the most natural exciter of the poetick vein. Besides, these Prophets are much advantaged for a more lively imitation of Enthusiasm above the more Vulgar pretenders to it, by an exalted Imagination. For the most vehement Objects of Religion, *God, Heaven, Hell, the glories of the new Hierusalem, some*

Pl. 68. 26.

*prophetick Streams*, being made familiar to their softer fancies, stand before their minds in very distinct and affecting *ideas*. Now where imagination is thus boiled up and often rub'd upon by the most moving objects, it fails not of raising affections and consequently expressions great and vehement as the objects are from whence they do arise. And therefore <sup>n</sup> *Quintilian*, to assist the power of Speaking very movingly and fluently *extempore* (which the *Orators* of those times so much endeavour'd) adviseth to imprint upon imagination, *φαντασίας*, the images of the things we are to speak about: as if we were to speak about the murder of any person, suddenly to make all the terrible images of the bleeding man to walk upon the Scene of Phancy, and to set (as it were) before our eyes all the black circumstances of the action, thereby to quicken affection, and by that Expression.

<sup>n</sup> *Quintil. Instit. Orat. l. 6. c. 3.*

I intend not these words to stifle the devout ardors of holy men displayed in affectionate *o pantings after God* and a divine Nature, in desires too big for words, divine relishes, and that unforced Rhetorick which the *abundance of their hearts* instructs them unto, when to bespeak God in private. For our Religion could no more please our selves then God, if it could not ravish the heart

<sup>o</sup> Ps. 42. 1.

heart as well as renew it, if it were a kind of *caput mortuum*, an heavy, stark, insipid thing, without heat and Spirit. Heat and zeal is the *calidum innatum* of the *New Man*, without which he neither lives nor moves. Only care must be had, that this heat and zeal (like the flame at *Pentecost*) aspire and mount upward, but without firing the Persons head, and making him of too hot and fiery a temper to bear any confinement of Opinion or practice, by Scripture, laws or the Reasons of wise men. I have in all this designed only the disparagement of the ignorant imaginations of those men, which (like the heathens of old) look upon heat and noise, words full of charms thrown out without method or measure upon the sudden, and very vehement affections, the symptoms of a person *full of God*, and managed by some power transcendent to natural. Whereas all these things, howsoever, like Meteors, they carry an heavenly appearance in the eye of ignorance, we have found of a more common and base Extraction. Nor is the mighty power they may have over the Spirits of others, any argument to the contrary; all fluent language, feathered with soft and delicate phrases, and pointed with pathetical accents, being naturally fitted (as the stage will assure us) to make a deep impression upon the heart.

Ἐκ βα-  
χάνων ἢ πε-  
ριφέρων πρὸς  
ἀνεργαζόντων  
ἐμμελείας  
πρὸς ἡ μάλα  
κόπῃσι, καὶ πε-  
ριτεσσιν. Plu-  
wel τὸ ἀν,

P Plu-  
tarch

*Isaiah* speaking of that rare Art, those Masters of Language, the *Gracian Sophists*, discovered in composing and delivering of their Orations, tells us, that they raised up a kind of *Bacchical Enthusiasm*, and transported their hearers, with some honey words, soft and effeminate phrases and accents, and a kind of singing tones. And no doubt those hearers, of whom he there speaks, which used to applaud their Orators at the end of their Declamations with a *Δεῦρ, Δεοφρίτως, δαμνρίτως, ἀνεργίτως*, divinely, heavenly, inimitably spoken, found themselves as much stirred and moved as many a Man at a Sermon, who yet thinks 'tis not the Art of the Preacher but the Spirit of God that warms and excites him.

It is further allledged in vindication of these Prophecies, that they are no evanid and languishing imaginations, but come upon the minds of those that have them with a light and evidence which bears before it all scruple about their divine Original: Now the Devil or Melancholy cannot possibly seal the mind with Opinions which carry that energy with them as these do: so that the very great Strength of the Impressions (like that of *Samson*) speaks the mighty presence of God with them: For how did the Prophets of God of old know themselves divinely incited but by feel-



feeling the hand of God strong upon them, and his word in their heart as a burning fire shut up within their bones, whence they were weary of forbearing and could not stay?

I answer, whence these prophetick phancies come to be thus vigorous and importunate shall be inquired in due place; for the present, I assert (yet not I but the Lord) that there may be an ἐνέργεια πλάνη, *energy of Error* as well as Truth, which may strongly carry a man quite out of the hearing of what ever reason may be tendered to disabuse him. Theodoret tells us of some Enthusiasts of his time, which receiving the vigorous working of some Dæmon in them, took it to be the presence of the Holy Ghost. And Gerson of many others, of which every one had it (he said) certainly revealed to him that he should be Pope. Amongst which there was one of great name and learning which left this revelation in writing with his own hand, and endeavoured to make it good by many arguments and conjectures: and we find in Scripture, false Prophets as much pretending plerophories and strength of perswasion as the true. As for those Characters whereby Gods Prophets were enabled to distinguish infallibly a divine

ἡ δαίμων ὁ πνὸς ἐνέργειαν εἰς δὲ χόρμους, καὶ πλάνη ἁγίου παρασίαν, ταύτην ὑπολαμβάνοντες, Hist. Eccles. l. 4. c. 10.

Inter hos quidam bene literatus & famolus hoc etiam propria manu in scriptis, quæ legi, reliquit & argumentis & conjecturis plurimis asserere conatus

est, J. Gerl. De distinct. ver. vil. à falsis,

u Mr. Smith.  
Disc. of Pro-  
phetics, c. 4.

dream, and prophetick impression, in their own minds, from the delusions of the Devil or Phancy, it is extremely difficult at this distance from that Age of Prophecy, clearly to assign them. " A late learned writer, from *Aberbanel* and *Maimonides*, in this matter thus ventures to resolve his Reader: *A Prophet when he is asleep may distinguish a Prophetical dream and that which is not such, by the vigor and liveliness of the perception, whereby he apprehends the thing propounded, or else by the imbecility and weakeness thereof.* And therefore *Maimon* hath said well. All Prophecy makes it self known to the Prophet that it is Prophecy indeed, that is, makes it self known to the Prophet, by the strength and vigor of the perception, so that his mind is freed from all scruple whatsoever about it. (A notion which he there endeavours to build up by Scriptures, but how short they fall of reaching the proof thereof, the indifferent Reader may easily perceive.) But though I doubt not but the divine illapses made a very deep impression upon the minds of holy men, and came attended with such light and evidence as chased away all shadow of scruple about their divine Original, yet I think to assert this vivacity of impression the distinctive character of divine from pretending Enthusiasms and dreams, is neither true nor safe.

Which

Which will perhaps appear by what time I have shewn the Reader, that the Ancient Interpreters of Dreams proceeded by some such rule as this. *Artemidorus* gives this difference between "Overſe" & "Ενύπνιον, a natural and divine Dream: "Ενύπνιον ἔργον *corruptionis*, a common Dream is the meer figment of men asleep, of which he saith, "So far as it appears in sleep it is vigorous and active upon the Scene of Fancy, but as soon as the sleep determines, that vanisheth from the thoughts. But then "Overſe, a divinatory Dream, ἐνεργεῖ αἰεὶ, hath a more lasting energy upon the mind, & creates a regard of the futurities declared in it, ingageth endeavor, and is made apt extremly to stir up and excite the Soul that bath it. Besides, if that power and evidence, with which a conceit may bear down the mind to a perswasion thereof, may be preferred the Sign of its divine Original, how many men shall we soon have that will look demurely, and tell the World (as the Sons of Fancy among us used to do) that God hath made out this or that to them, and that this is much upon their spirits, and therefore past question an intimation from God?

As for those accomplish'd Predictions brought to support the falling credit of these Modern Prophets, they will prove but <sup>2</sup> as <sup>2</sup> Prov. 25. 19. a foot out of joint. For there was no prophetic

ὅσον ἔστι  
ἐνύπνιον ὁρίζεται,  
ἐνεργεῖ, πᾶσι  
οὐδὲν ἢ ἡ  
ὑπὸν ἀφαι-  
ρεῖ.  
ὅν αἰεὶ ὁ  
ταύτην ἀνα-  
γορεύσας ὅτι  
μελλόντων, καὶ  
ἐν ὑπνῷ ἐν-  
εργεῖ, ἐπα-  
ροῦν τὰς ἐγ-  
κερήσεις, ἐ-  
ρείπειν τὴν  
ὁρεῖται  
καὶ ἡ  
πνεύματι  
οὐκ.

Artemid. O-  
neiroc. l. i. c. 1.

<sup>a</sup> See several Examples in Boz. Eugubin. de Sig. Eccles. l. 6. c. 2. b Tul. de Div. l. 1. Sibyllas prævidisse apud multas Gentes pericula divinitus imminentia admonuisse populos, &c. Jambl. de Myst. Ægypt. m. p. 59.

tick Sign foregoing to assure the accomplishment to be any other than a lucky hit. And besides, the <sup>a</sup> Papists, nay the <sup>b</sup> Heathens, tell us (and men must be willing to give that Faith they expect from others) of many instances of such Predictions delivered by their *Popes, Religioſo's, Diviners, Oracles*, very particularly accomplish'd. Now then I demand, were these Prophecies from *Heaven*, or from *Men*? If from *Heaven*, why then do many men think with no more favor of the Heathens and Papists, to whom God seems to give the testimony of *Jesus, the Spirit of Prophecy*? If from *men* (assisted by civil Prudence or evil Spirits) then all accomplish'd Predictions are not concluding Arguments of the divine Inspiration of the Authors. But because God in the trial of Prophets hath <sup>c</sup> directed us to a regard of the issues of their Prophecies, this matter may seem to merit a more close and particular Consideration, to which therefore I shall next apply myself.

<sup>c</sup> Deut. 18. 21, 22.

CHAP.

## CHAP. V.

*The failing of Vulgar Prophecies, an assurance of their Vanity.*

*Vulgar Prophecies referring to the Publick, generally false: that proved from Justin Martyr, and the falshood of some Modern Prophecies particularly instanced in. A sayleur but in a circumstance a sign of the forgery of the whole Prophecy, and why. A firesold account given of the pretended accomplishments of some Modern Prophecies. How far it seems fitting that Prophecies should descend to the circumstances of Events. An account why some of these Prophecies his and others miss. All Divine Prophecies fulfilled which were absolutely delivered. Some Characters to distinguish such Prophecies by.*

**T**HAT which may yet more fully secure us in a perswasion of the Vanity of all these Modern Prophecies, is this: *All these unattested Prophets generally fail in all their Prophecies, but always in some.* Generally in all; viz. such are most fit to assure men of their divine Inspiration, as those only are which are of a publick reference. *Jer. d Jer. 28. 8.* *remiah* tells us, that the *Prophets which had been before him of old, prophesied both against many Countries, and against great Kingdoms, of War and of Evil and of Pestilence*; as they also did sometimes of great National Blessings. Now the coming to pass of such Prophecies was the most undoubted evidence of their Divinity: for though the Devil may be presumed able to bring about some



some little turns in the lives of private men, yet the spirit of the living creature onely moves in those great Wheels, the turns in States are soly under the particular conduct of God; those Wheels are too great for him to move one way or other. And therefore *Justin Martyr*, when the accomplish'd Predictions of the Ethnick Prophets were oppos'd to him, returns this judicious Answer; *No Event which the Ethnick Prophets foretold, either against the Truth of God, or his Worshipers, or referring to the publick Affairs of the Grecian States, ever came to pass*; though perhaps some matters of a more narrow concern might, which fell more within the Devil's compass. An Observation more fully justified in the pretending Prophets of later times: what is become of all the Oracular leaves of *Grebner*: hath not the wind taken them away, and the whirlwind scattered them? (as it did those of the *Sibyl*.) He prophesied (saith *Mr Mede*) great matters of *Henry the fourth of France*, which proved clean contrary; of *Queen Elizabeth*, and other Princes, which never came to pass: I have, I know not how often to satisfie one or other, told them as I now tell you, and yet every five or six years it comes up again as if it had never been discovered. Men are prone to believe any thing they would have, &c. And how have all the swelling Prophecies

ε ουδεν δν  
περειπον οι  
μάντης (εδ-  
νικοι) η χρι-  
στη αληθείας  
δεσ, η τ σι-  
κομύων αυ-  
των, η χρι-  
στου σαπείας, η  
ελλενικων  
μεν μάντων  
η εκβατων  
η δεσποτων  
ετα Resp. ad  
Oratod. q. x. m.  
αυτοι μαντες  
εταυτοι μαν-  
τες  
f V. Mr Mede's  
Letter to Mr  
Harlib. Part.  
4. p. 652.

Prophecies of *Cotterius*, *Christina*, *Poniativja*, and *Drabitius*, concerning the sudden Conversion of the *Turks*, the Establishment of the *German Churches* by *Frederick King of Bohemia* and *Gustavus of Sweden*, the sudden Propagation of the Gospel throughout the World, the advancement first of *Ragotzi* the Father, and then the Son and then the Brother, to the Crown of *Hungary*, of the dreadful overthrow of the Papacy (many of them delivered about fifty years ago) been delivered of nothing but the wind? even their great & Patrons themselves being witnesses; while yet so enchanted with the Opinion of them as to publish them now as the Oracles of God, when Divine Providence hath encouraged sober Christians to hiss them out of the World. And indeed it is so<sup>b</sup> the usage of Divine Providence to shame the impatience and curiosity of men discovered in attending to such Prophecies, that I perswade my self it is next to impossible to instance a Modern Prophecy referring to the Publick, that speaks distinctly as to words and time of accomplishment, that failed not in the substance or some eminent circumstance thereof. Now a fayleur but in a tittle, is a *dead Flie* sufficient to make the whole Prophecy smell strongly of an imposture. Of Divine Prophecies וְלֹא-רָקִיק וְלֹא-נִלְיָא (as the Master

*Parianini*  
*Apologiam*  
*meam, quam*  
*post publicas*  
*revelationes*  
*Cotterii, Dra-*  
*bicii, &c.*  
*mox contra*  
*omnem speciem*  
*eventus spei*  
*nostrae contra-*  
*rios, amicorum*  
*trepidatio-*  
*texere coege-*  
*rat. J. Comen-*  
*in Praefat. ad*  
*Histor. Re-*  
*velat.*  
*b Isa. 44. 25.*

Vid. Pocock.  
 Port. Mos.  
 p. 23.

4 Jer. 23. 28.

Master to whom we have had such frequent recourse, well notes) *not the greater nor lesser part, substance or circumstance, ever fell to the ground.* And He tells us, those words of *Jeremiah*, <sup>k</sup> *The Prophet that hath a Dream, let him tell a Dream; and he that hath my Word, let him speak my Word faithfully; what is the chaff to the wheat? their Doctors used to glois thus; Prophecy is a thing pure without the allay of any falshood mixed with it, like wheat cleansed from the chaff; but Dreams and other vulgar Indications have a lie always intermixed, and are like chaff in which there are but some few grains of wheat.* God is careful to accomplish the very criticisms and circumstances of his Predictions, because this gives the greatest assurance of their Divine Author. For the substance of Events may possibly be thought Object great enough for the Eye of humane Prudence to see afar off, but circumstances are easily presumed too little for our heavy Eyes to discern at any great removes.

If any Person better seen in the Writings of Modern Prophets, then I have any ambition to be thought to be, is able to instance a Prophecy of any longer date, whose words did exactly touch the Event foretold both in the substance and circumstance thereof; yet he shall alway observe his Prophet to have

have failed in some one, nay in very many other instances, if any thing talkative (as it is well the prophetick humor in such persons disposeth them to be) which is a sufficient assurance that he foretold nothing by a divine suggestion. Thus *Savonarola* (a *Dominican*) foretold long before, that *Charls* the eighth of *France* should come into *Italy* with a great Army, which came to pass:

But *withal*, that God had revealed to him that the State Ecclesiastick should be reformed by force of Arms: which (saith the *Historian*) hath not yet (nor yet) hapned, but at that time was very likely to have been effected. The Examples of this kind are too great for Arithmetick.

The two branches of this Consideration I find struck at by a double Objection, which I shall endeavor to secure them from. It is opposed to the first, That very many of these Modern Prophecies have been very punctually accomplish'd, though unseal'd by any divine Sign attending the delivery of them. In Answer hereunto, I return, (I.) *Meer prudential Conjectures* after the Event often commence accomplish'd Prophecies in vulgar Opinion; the common sort of people being apt to invest every thing that lies out of the road of their thoughts and observations with the Opinion of some Divinity lodged in it. Thus that famous

Speech

*Ad hac divinitus sibi patefactū esse dicebat oportere statum Ecclesiasticum per vim armorum emendari. Nondum quidem istud accidit, sed tunc tempore prope erat ut fieret. Phil. Cominæus, de bel. Neap. l. 3. p. m. 586.*

## Speech of Seneca the Tragedian.

Venient annis  
 Secula seris, quibus Oceanus  
 Vincula rerum laxet, & ingens  
 Pateat Tellus, Typhisque novus  
 Detegat orbes; nec sit terris  
 Ultima Thule,-----

hath been concluded the voice of God, a prophetick instinct referring to the discovery of America in these latter Ages, which was indeed but the voice of a Man, a rational conjecture proceeding upon a probable persuasion, that so great a part of the Globe of the Earth was not all Sea, and so would in time be found. <sup>m</sup> Cardan having related several very strange Predictions of his, exactly fulfilled, adds, *Neither would I have any one think these to have been far fetch'd, either from the Devil or the Stars; but onely from the Oracle of Aristotle, who gives true Divination onely to prudent Persons.* This prudential Divination, which is but the foresight of the effect in the promises of some parturient Causes, is familiar with wise and observant men. For a wise-mans heart will tell him more then seven watchmen that are upon a tower, whose office it is to see men and things at distance. Prudence is but the contraction of Providence in the name, and the commendable <sup>n</sup> image of it in the nature thereof. (2.) Many of these accomplishments were

<sup>m</sup> Nec velim  
 quenquam o-  
 pinari quod  
 hec longius  
 petita sint, aut  
 ex Demone  
 aut ex astris,  
 sed ex Aristoteli  
 Oraculo,  
 solum enim  
 inquit ille,  
 prudentum ac  
 sapientum ve-  
 ram esse Divi-  
 nationem.

Card. de vit.  
 propr. c. 42.

<sup>n</sup> Ο Θεός αὐ-  
 τὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐν  
 τοῖς νοητοῖς  
 σῆμα ἀρχέ-  
 τυπον, διδο-  
 ον εἰκόνα τῆς  
 μενούσης.

Synes. de Reg.



were rather lucky hits then divine foresights. These Prophets are many, and perpetually shooting of their bolts, and it were hard if they did not sometimes hit the mark, especially when standing so near as sometimes they do before they let fly (foretelling things, removed by no great distance of time,) Such a lucky cast was that singular foresight of *Tully*, reflected upon by him, self as a kind of divine Testimony to the sincerity of his intentions in reference to the Commonwealth. And the fortunate Speech of that Ancient *Grecian* Philosopher *Lucan* *Ocellus*, *Greece hath been often barbarous heretofore, and so shall be again in after Ages*, some would be ready now to prefer to the repute of a Prophecy, which was but a loose & conjectural Conclusion built upon an observation that Bodies Politick, as well as Natural, have their decays and years of dotage, and that the deepest dye of any worldly felicity would in time languish and change color. (3.) A great part of these Prophecies are meer impostures, and contrived after the Event, by some idle heads. For it is seldom that we hear of them, till the matters related in them are past, and then these Prophets, having the Event before them to take measure of, make their Prophecy to fit it exactly, both in substance and circumstance, that so there might be the less suspi-

o *Præclara conscientia, sustentor, cum cogito me de Rep. aut meruisse optime cum potuerim, aut certe nunquā nisi divine cogitasse, eāq; ipsa tempestate eversam esse Rem. quam ego 14 annis ante prospexerim. Epist. l. 10. 3.*  
*Πολύμαχος*  
*ἔσται Βελούπ*  
*ἢ Ἐλ. 25.*  
*Lucan. Ocell.*  
*ἔλ. 7. Part.*  
*x. 7.*

cion that they saw things to come (like the man but half cured of his blindness) only in rude generals, and by the heavy Eye of humane prudence. Whereas there cannot be a greater assurance of Sophistry in a Prediction, than an over-buried and critical enumeration of Events therein. For Prophecies should deliver the general substance of some one great circumstance of an Event so distinctly that they be not thought loose conjectures, but as to the circumstances of less remark, they should be wholly silent, that they be not suspected only disguised Histories when once they are fulfilled. For this Reason perhaps the Divine Prophecies come forth (like the pillar in the Wilderness) partly cloud and partly fire, cloudy and obscure as to the lesser circumstances, but bright and clear enough as to the substance of Events foretold. Whereas these Vulgar Prophecies either stay in loose Generals, and like a sack are so contrived that they may be clapt upon any person, but perfectly fit none; or else are most industriously particular and scarce omit a circumstance. Thus the pretended *Sibylline* Oracles tell our Saviors very name *Jesus*; and whereas the Prophet only foretels, *A Virgin shall conceive*, they add, *The Virgin Mary shall conceive*, and the like. For so it is usual for such Apes of Prophecy to become ridiculous by an over-acted imitation,

imitation.

imitation. (34.) Many of theſe ſeemly Prophecies on their ſucceſſes, in all probability, in ſignificant efficacy. The Devil firſt excites ſuch Images in the Fancies of theſe Prophets, as may probably determine them to foretel many things, which he conceives moſt likely to fall within his ſphere of aſſu-  
 nity, and then he accompliſheth as many as he can, though with no more of true ſor-  
 eſight then that man hath that ſhould think fit, when he knows them, to fulfil many of his Neighbors Dreams. And he is the more ready to interpoſe his power in this buſineſs, becauſe when men ſhall ſee their Prophecies on Dreams, of future contingencies eſpecially, thus ſtrangely iſſued, they will ſtrike their heads preſently, and make no doubt of their near approaches to the prophetic grace, and whileſt other men are detained in an idle attendance to ſuch ſhining vanities, they are taken alive by this Fowler in his net. And this Conſideration may probably reſolve us why ſome of theſe Prophecies ſo ſtrangely hit, and others miſs, may becauſe the Devil fulfilſs us many of them, as fall within his compaſs, and thoſe which his confined power extends not to accompliſh neceſſarily fall to the ground.  
 (35.) Several of theſe Prophecies are deli-  
 vered in words ſo looſe and unconfined both as to ſenſe and time, that it were a great wonder,

if amidst the vast varieties of Providence they appeared not fulfilled in some Event and Time or other. Thus it was noted of old

s Callide, qui illa Oracula composuit, per fecit, ut quodcunq; accidisset, prædictum videretur, hominū & temporum definitione sublatā adhibuit etiā latebram obscuritatis, ut iidem versus aliās in aliam rem posse accommodari viderentur. Tul. de Div. l. 2.

t Si omnia, Unde igitur fuit, quod Israelitici etiam Propheta à suis ludibria passi, queritantibus, Ubi est verbum, &c. Præfat. in Hist. Revel. p. 11. u See Num. 23. 19. Isai. 34. 16. Josh. 23. 14. 1 Sam. 3. 19. Isai. 14. 24. Mat. 5. 18. Hab. 2. 3.

of the true Sibylline Oracles, that they were composed in such dark and undetermined expressions, that Fancy might make them, like a Picture, look to any Person, any Event whatsoever. All this offers us some account of those successes which these Propheticall Essays have sometimes been followed with, and withal conclude the great necessity of some divine Sign to attest the Prophet or Prophecy, that so it may be known that the Event was not a chance, a prudential foresight, or diabolical delusion, but a true propheticall accomplishment.

To the second branch of the present Argument it is opposed, that many of God's Prophecies were never fulfilled. If all were (saith Comenius) whence was it that the Prophets became the publick scorn, the People sarcastically demanding, Where is the Word of the Lord? Let it come now, Jerem. 17. 15. To this Objection (though indeed it merit rather a Censure than an Answer) I return, That Scripture abundantly assures us, that never one word which God spake fell to the ground: and therefore perhaps the LXX chose to render *Urim* and *Thummim* by *ἐνδείξεις* and *ἀποδείξεις*, Manifestation and Test, because by these two especially were God's

Oracles

Oracles distinguished from the Devil's; God's being eminent for perspicuity and Truth, and the Devil's for obscurity and falsehood. God hath given us this character to know a false Prophet by, *When a Prophet speaketh in the Name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, this is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the Prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; and therefore we may rest assured, that God, if he speak with his mouth, will fulfil with his hand.* True indeed, we read of some divine Prophecies of great Blessings and Judgments not literally fulfilled: But these (as God himself tells us) though absolute in their terms, yet were always conditional in their interpretation; and therefore when ever they were not fulfilled in terms, there was some great sin or repentance interposing which gave a very rational account thereof to the minds of men. But all divine Prophecy, absolute both in its terms and intent, constantly was fulfilled. Now when the Prophecy was such, the People might understand by such Signs as these, \* If the Prophecy were sealed with the Oath of God, or some equivalent asseveration: \* If it were delivered as a Sign of the truth of the Prophet's Mission, or of some other more considerable Prediction: \* If the Prediction were delivered in terms of the Preter-tense;

Deut. 18, 22.

x i Kin. 8, 45.

Jer. 18, 7, 8, 9

Sam. 15, 29.



1 King. 15. 29.

Zech. 1. 6.

\* If it were often repeated by the same or more Prophets: \* If it were a Prediction of some Evil against things or persons evidently devoted to destruction: \* If the things foretold were of an indifferent nature, not greatly good or evil, and many such like. These I say constantly came to pass, and therefore to those words of the people (which thought a Prophecy delay'd, forgotten) I oppose the words of God appealing to the Experience of these very People: *My Words and my Statutes which I commanded my servants the Prophets, did they not take hold of your Fathers? to which the People, in a more serious temper, return; Like as the Lord of Hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he done unto us.*

CHAP.

## CHAP. VI.

*Many Modern Prophecies proved to arise from Melancholy.*

The strong Opinion of Inspiration in Modern Prophecy, proved an effect of the power of Melancholy. Their attended Visions attributed to the same cause. The Visions of melancholy men, why many, and to them very evident. Their vehement inclinations to Prophecy proved also a Symptom of Melancholy. How this humor becomes effectual thus to excite to Prophecy. Dying men, why often, in appearance, Prophetical. A natural account of the Prophetical Essays of the Pythia. Plutarch's Philosophical account of some ceasing Oracles justified. The ardors in these Prophets and the Sibyls, natural. The delusions of Melancholy assisted usually by the cooperation of the Devil.

**A** Fifth Consideration to reprehend the Faith of these Prophecies, is this; Those popular Wonders which shew forth themselves in the Authors of them, plainly appear but the natural Effects of Melancholy tinctured with Religion. This will appear more clearly if we be a little particular; (1.) That invincible confidence (which enchants the vulgar) of their being divinely inspired. It is ordinary with such such men to take to themselves the titles of the Trump of God, the last Prophet, the Word and Power of God, and the like; and that with a plerophory that shall bear it self against the strongest Reasons, contrary Events

Confid. 5.

b Placuit Deo-  
per me tanquā  
ultimam suam  
Tubam Nati-  
onibus, &c.  
Drabic. Revel.  
Div. Epit. p. 16  
c Pñua eiua  
xj mēcūua xj  
Swaww  
uti Maximil-  
Montani Pro-  
phetis. apud  
Eus. l. 5. c. 19.

of things, yea sometimes the greatest bodily severities that can be used to discompose their Dreams. Now as the Heathens holding *ἡνέκα ἀνίστατο*, that the brain was sacred, and the seat of some Deity, when any one neezed they would venerate the noise as a kind of expression of the Deity inspired in the head; thus these men being strongly possess'd by this conceit, that they are *God-ed with God*, and that the *Holy Ghost* is lodg'd in their heads, not a fancy can rise up therein but it is received with as sacred Opinions as a Papist doth the rings and reliques of his Saint; not a cloudy expression drops from them but it is christned a *depth* and a great mystery, their ear cannot tingle but God is thought to whisper into it, and the men cannot dream at the common rate of other mortals.

Whereas all these imaginations are but the issues of that impostrous humor when it passeth into a disease. A Melancholy Fancy is a kind of *Incubus* and *Succubus* to itself, serving to beget and to conceive any odd crotchet, and that with so much strength, that it appears before the mind in the certainty of sight or taste. And it is so usual for this black humor to bewitch the mind into some one wild and extravagant conceit, while it appears sound and untouch'd in all its other judgments, that the *Greek Physician*

Physician hath defin'd it, *e* A solemn sadness and seriousness about some one odd Fancy without a fever. Now look as the images which appears before our Minds in a dream, ow their general odness of compo-  
 sure to the power of Fancy over reason in our sleep, but their more particular figures usually to the occasions of the day before: thus the conceits of Melancholy (the dreams of waking men) ow their general wildness and fondness, to the undue figuration of the brain or Spirits by this anomalous humor, but their particular kinds to those mutable occasions of common life, the head is most accustomed to receive impressions from. Men of a more contemplative *Genius*, conceit themselves inspired with some rare mysteries in Nature, with the Cabbalistick sense of Scripture, with the understanding of the hidden analogies between the sensible and intelligible, and the greater and lesser world, with the Art to cure all the natural leprogies of mettals, and the like: Men whose course of life determines their thoughts more upon civil affairs this humor possesseth with the opinion of their being designed Popes or Princes, or some Restorers of the publick liberty. And persons of a more devotional complexion talk much of Visions, raptures, converse with Angels and prophetic, and are apt to fall down before

*e* Εἰς ἀδυσμῶν  
 ὅτι μὴ φαν-  
 τασίη, ἀλλὰ τε  
 πυρετῶ. Aret.  
 cappad. l. i. c. 5.

f Plut. dei nō  
mō xp̄i v. 66.

fore every idol of their busy fancy, as if  
some Deity were lodged in it. Thus this  
giddy humor moves every man (as *Plu-  
tarch* saith the Divinatory Enthusiasm doth)  
*καὶ ὁ μαγικὸς, ἀκούσας ὡς ἐκεῖνος ἐστὶν φυσικῶς  
διεσφῶν καὶ κλινόμενος.*

How the humors of the body drive at an  
ability thus to impregnate the mind with  
conceits wild and monstrous beyond the Va-  
rieties of *Africa*, is an enquiry not perti-  
nent here; but to question that so they can,  
is to speak our selves strangers to all the  
stories of *Hypochondriacks*, books and dis-  
courses abound withall; and that 'tis nothing  
but the enormous power of a disturbed ima-  
gination that bears down these persons into  
a belief of divine visions, voices and illap-  
ses, appears sufficiently in that they usually  
commence Prophets *per saltum*, and before  
they are tolerably qualified with knowledg  
or piety, they become inspired; and that  
though heaven and earth refute their pre-  
dictions once and again, an *heart deceived*  
by the fulness and importunity of the Im-  
pression, *both so turned them aside*, that  
they cannot attend; and therefore are no  
more awakened out of their prophetick  
dreams by any contrary events, then the  
begger out of his dreams of greatness and  
honor by the rags he wears and the dung-  
hill he sleeps on. An example of which  
grossness



grossness and non-attendance we have in *Tradition* (a German Prophet, of whom so much written and discours'd of late) who though he saw his predictions clearly refuted by events, and told thereof at once by his Friends and at both ears by his enemies, yet was so *overrun* *with* *the* *power* *of* *his* *prophetick* *dreams* *as* *to* *settle* *himself* *in* *his* *fond* *opi-* *nion* *of* *Inspiration* *by* *returning* *;* *Annun* *g* *Hift. Revel.* *vox Dei est quæ dicitur* &c. Is it not the *p. 248.* voice of God which *saith* *God doth nothing* *but* *he* *reveals* *his* *secrets* *to* *his* *servants* *;* *b* *Amos* *3. 7.* *and that in the later daies he will pour out his* *Joel. 2. 28.* *Spirit upon all flesh, and young men shall see* *Visions* *and* *old* *men* *dream* *dreams* *;* *Scriptures* *which* *any* *pretender* *to* *prophecy* *might* *have* *cited* *in* *his* *vindication* *,* *as* *well* *as* *he.*

2. *Those wonderful Visions represented to their minds in some Ecstasy or profound sleep.* At such a time some very frightful or lovely images shew themselves upon the Scene of Fancy, and those (as dreams take figure from the occasions of the day) generally made after the likeness of those Apocalypticall or other Prophetick Visions, with which the minds of such persons when awake are commonly entertained and deeply sealed. Now these *Visa*, by the great singularity of their form, vivacity of representation

sentation, and propheticall analogy, do so  
 wonderfully affect and possess the Mind,  
 and inchant it with such huge fears or joys,  
 that the Melancholy person doubts not to  
 receive them with the faith and affection of  
 Divine discoveries. And therefore if the  
 more terrible aspect of the images represen-  
 ted to his mind, proclaim them the proper  
 emblems of some great evils, he presently  
 concludes that God, who renders his ser-  
 vants with the care and affection a Mother  
 doth her sucking child, would willingly  
 have them forewarned, that so they might  
 by repentance, prayers or prudence avert the  
 impendent evil from themselves, or fortifie  
 their minds with Christian patience to re-  
 ceive its coming. But if their more delight-  
 ful form prefer them the types of some joy-  
 ful Event, as is the freedom of the Church  
 laboring under some heavy oppression, the  
 propagation of the Gospel, and the enlarge-  
 ment of Christs Kingdom, they hastily  
 catch at the welcome token, and that is  
 thought foretold therein which themselves  
 have the greatest passion for. And they  
 are the more soft and easy to such propheti-  
 cal conceits, because those passions of  
*Fear* and *Hope*, so intimate to our Na-  
 tures, and which generally govern the Per-  
 swasions even of wiser men, are so regnant  
 in their Souls made so impressiv by Me-  
 lancholy

lincholy and some tinctures of Religion.

Now these pretended Visions, which conciliate Veneration to these Prophets with under persons, will appear much beneath our wonder, if it be considered that Melancholy when it exceeds its just proportions, is very productive of them. This the Philosopher hath noted,

*Men that are of a talkative and melancholy temper see any kind of Visions.* And this, especially because they

have so deep a resentment of the most affecting objects, whose images therefore recur to the fancy when they are asleep, in most distinct and lively figures. Now the Visions of such men are the more evident and lively,

because of the dryness of their temper (as

*Galen* gives the reason) whereby there are no such mysts and vapors rising up to

confound and obscure them, which are the cause why the night Visions of persons full

fed, or overcome with wine, are so confused and leave such languishing impressions

upon their waking Fancies. These images being so clear and active, the mind takes

them (as the birds did those on the tables of *Apelles*) for true and real things,

and as when we suddenly awake out of some very affecting dream, the figures which its clearness and strength of

impression made upon the Fancy, cannot

*Ἦν ὁ πῶν ἀνὴρ  
φύσις ἀδελφῶν  
ὅτι καὶ μελαγχολικὴ πᾶν  
τοῦ πατρὸς ὅ-  
τις ὁρῶσι.  
Arist. de div.  
per insomn. c. 1*

*Melancholici  
propter sic-  
citatem, vis-  
in somni-  
proprus evi-  
dentia appa-  
rent. Com-  
ment. in Hip-  
pocrat. de Hu-  
mor. l. 2.*

not presently be blotted out, but will continue for a time to entertain it with the affections of a great reality; thus (but by a more obstinate delusion) are the persons we now speak of imposed upon by an unruly Fancy. For when deep sleep hath fallen upon them, and cut the Soul off from all converse with things sensible, it is wholly imment in the view of those images which walk upon the stage of Imagination, with which the common sense is as invariably moved, as if excited by some object from abroad; and therefore it receives them with the Opinion of their being not phantastical but real and divine appearances. As for those Visions these Prophets speak of when they are awake, they may arise from those most vehement and intense thoughts, which represent some great Objects to them in very distinct and affecting manner, with which the mind is so fully possessed and sealed, as not much to attend to the circumstance of the real presence thereof, and therefore easily persuades it self, that object stood before it of which it had so lively a perception, and with which it was so inwardly touched and affected. Besides, nothing so familiar as for men of very impressive phancies and numerous dispositions to have a continual scene of strange sights presented before them. The Philosopher no-

red

m V. Joh. de  
Quæst. de Irr-  
ta. Sens. l. 3.  
q. 3.

n Ennioz ἡ  
νεκρῶν καὶ  
πνεύματι δια-  
βλέποντι,  
ἐάν ἢ οὐτός,  
φαίνεται ἐν-  
σωλα πολλά,  
κινεῖσθαι,  
ὡς ἐγχετα-  
λύπησιν,  
πολλὰ καὶ φο-  
βερόντα.  
De Insom. c. 3.

ced long ago, that to persons young and un-  
 derstandings, if it be dark, there appear ma-  
 ny strange images moving to and fro, for this  
 is a great fear they hide themselves in the  
 bed clothes. Whereas in such sights the  
 Fancy is both Scene and Spectator to it self.  
 This shews that 'tis possible that these pre-  
 tended Visions may be but the inchant-  
 ments of Melancholy. But he that con-  
 sidereth that Divine Visions were vouchsafed as  
 rarely and upon as concerning occasions as  
 Miracles will believe it probable that they  
 are no other. Did God dispense the favors  
 of these divine visits to the Patriarchs and  
 Prophets so sparingly of old, and are they  
 become now as familiar to some men as  
 dreams to others? Familiars, hath been  
 the title of bad spirits but never of good.  
 3. Their vehement incitations to proph-  
 cy. They feel the new images of things or  
 persons striking with great strength and evi-  
 dence upon their Fancies, and themselves  
 quickened by a very hot and active prin-  
 ciple whose powers they cannot easily stand  
 against, to make the Vision plain, and to de-  
 clare to others what conceits and passions  
 it comes attended with; and therefore they  
 conceive that the word of the Lord is as a fire  
 shut up in their bones, and that they are in  
 the midst of a fire, wholly possess'd by some divine  
 power which they cannot bear themselves  
 against,



against, may indeed should not, nor who  
 are they that should not, nor who  
 Whereas all these things are but the subtil  
 fallacies which the fumes of hypochondri-  
 cal Melancholy, when grown hot and dry,  
 put upon the Fancy, being as apt to con-  
 fuse the brain, and make it improductive  
 as odd conceits, as the active vapors of hot  
 wine. These vapors being carried by the  
 brain with a mighty force, confound the na-  
 tural figurations thereof, and excite some  
 new Idols therein, which by the singularity  
 of their appearance, and importunity of oc-  
 currence, cannot but create affections cor-  
 respondent to them which together with  
 those fiery Spirits, will put men upon great  
 freedom of speech (that which a very affect-  
 ing dream will sometimes do) so that  
 themselves of those strange thoughts which  
 upon such occasions will rise up within  
 them. Now 'tis no wonder at all (as the  
 Philosopher saith) if such kind of men  
 being thus incited to speak very much  
 and of very various things (the Seenes of  
 Fancy being so often shifted by these hot  
 dy vapors) that they have some fantastic  
 hits, and true divinations.

That 'tis only the soverain heat of these  
 Vapors which excites these predictions,  
 appears probable in that every flatuous ca-

Job 32. 18,  
 19, 20.

Διὰ τὸ  
 πολλὰ καὶ παρ-  
 ὁδοῦ καὶ κινεῖ-  
 σθαι, ἐμψυ-  
 χίζονται  
 οἱ μύθοι, καὶ  
 οἱ λόγοι ἐκ-  
 τέρνονται.

De Divin per  
 Insomni. c. 2.  
 Cerebri fla-  
 tuosa calefa-  
 ctio, unde cum  
 que proueniat,  
 sub certa tem-  
 perie constitu-  
 ta incitat ad  
 mira eloquen-  
 da, per canti-  
 lenas, hominemque supra se pene constituit.

Christ. & castro de Veridic. l. 2. c. 11.

lesaction

Infusion of the brain whence soever it arise,  
is apt to make a man ecstatical, to express  
itself in wonderful speeches, and those often  
prophetical. The vapors of wine meeting  
with some constitutions, have strangely ap'd  
on Enthusiasm; as appears from those Ver-  
ses of the *Ætæa*, upon occasion of the truly  
Ævial doings upon some of their idolatrous  
Festivals.

Ovid. Fa-  
stor. l. 3.

*Invenies illic qui Nestoris ebibat annos  
Qua sit per calices facta Sibylla suos.*

*There shall you find old men turn'd bores by  
wine,*

*Town Maids old Sibylls, who by th' cup  
divine.*

Accordingly in some Oracular places, the  
Diviners used to excite the prophetick fa-  
culty (as they thought) by a liberal dose  
of wine or some water which had a kind of  
inebriating property: such hot and unwieldy  
vapors (though excited by a fever) have  
made dying men so famous, for their pro-  
phetical Essays, in all Ages and Nations:  
though they have been vainly thought (as  
all Extraordinaries, especially about the  
minds of men usually are) of a more divine  
extraction. And that prophetick fit which  
seiz'd the *Pythia* placed over some hollow  
cavern of the Earth, was owing to the sub-  
til

2 In hoc ady-  
to, Liberi, va-  
ticipinaturi,  
plurimo mero  
sumpto, uti  
apud Clarium  
aqua epota ef-  
fantur Oracu-  
la. Macrob.  
Saturn. l. 1.

c. 18.  
V. II. Vol. De  
Idolat. l. 2.

P 687.

a Sibylla susci-  
picbat Deum  
per spiritum  
quendam tenu-  
em igneumque  
qui erumpebat  
ex ore antri,  
&c. De Myst.  
Egypt. m. p. 66.  
b Alibi faci-  
dici specus,  
quorum exha-  
latione temu-  
lenti, fura  
precinunt, ut  
Delphis, &c.  
Plin. Nat.  
Hist. l. 2. p. 93.  
c Strab. Geog.  
l. 9.

d To this pur-  
pose Prudenti-  
us: Perdidit  
insanos men-  
dax Dodona  
Vapores:  
In Apoth. tit.  
cont. Jud.

e Vid. Moth.  
Var. l. 3. c. 11.

f

g

h

i

j

k

l

m

n

the same fiery spirit (as a *temblor* calls it)  
thence ascending her tender body and his  
resuscitating of her, though in somewhat a  
more violent manner than wine would have  
done (in so much as sometimes she dyed in  
the fire) and setting her Fancy (already  
strongly possess'd with the extraordinary Sa-  
credness of her place and office) with wild  
conceits which she delivered in as wild a  
manner: and this account of the pretended  
inspiration of the *Pythia* is favored by  
*Strabo*, telling us that the expected the  
Oracular power being placed over the nar-  
row mouth of the Sacred cavern, and that  
thence was carried forth an Enthusiastick  
vapor or spirit, which excited the latent dis-  
position to prophecy in her soul, as the wind  
doth the Musical power of some well-tuned  
Organ. And therefore I think *Plutarch* not  
so much out, as commonly thought in his  
Treatise *de Iside*, concerning the raising of Oracles, for so it  
should be rendered, (all nor being silenced  
in his time, nor long after) when attributing  
their Silence in some formerly famous pla-  
ces, to the languishing of that Enthusi-  
astick Vapor which inspired the Prophets,  
the caverns (as he conceives) lying conti-  
nually open being apt like exposed liquors  
to lose Spirits, and to decay in their an-  
cient

(as *Verba*) This imposture the Devil  
 seduced the world withall, till the light of  
 the Gospel and Philosophy made the fallacy  
 notorious. Now only men of sense and reason  
 will return. As for that mighty ardor  
 whereby they are carried forth to delude  
 themselves, it is perfectly a natural thing,  
 being but the impatience of that hot and  
 humble vapor of fermented Melancholy.  
 The Sibyls of old (which Aristotle rightly  
 udgeth inspired only by this fiery Spirit)  
 used to often to mention those diving fires  
 they felt themselves (as they thought)  
 quickned and excited by, which were only  
 the Synaptoemes of this exalted humor of  
 which the same Philosopher notes. *Secundum*  
*de Meteoris* 2. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100. 101. 102. 103. 104. 105. 106. 107. 108. 109. 110. 111. 112. 113. 114. 115. 116. 117. 118. 119. 120. 121. 122. 123. 124. 125. 126. 127. 128. 129. 130. 131. 132. 133. 134. 135. 136. 137. 138. 139. 140. 141. 142. 143. 144. 145. 146. 147. 148. 149. 150. 151. 152. 153. 154. 155. 156. 157. 158. 159. 160. 161. 162. 163. 164. 165. 166. 167. 168. 169. 170. 171. 172. 173. 174. 175. 176. 177. 178. 179. 180. 181. 182. 183. 184. 185. 186. 187. 188. 189. 190. 191. 192. 193. 194. 195. 196. 197. 198. 199. 200. 201. 202. 203. 204. 205. 206. 207. 208. 209. 210. 211. 212. 213. 214. 215. 216. 217. 218. 219. 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1016. 1017. 1018. 1019. 1020. 1021. 1022. 1023. 1024. 1025. 1026. 1027. 1028. 1029. 1030. 1031. 1032. 1033. 1034. 1035. 1036. 1037. 1038. 1039. 1040. 1041. 1042. 1043. 1044. 1045. 1046. 1047. 1048. 1049. 1050. 1051. 1052. 1053. 1054. 1055. 1056. 1057. 1058. 1059. 1060. 1061. 1062. 1063. 1064. 1065. 1066. 1067. 1068. 1069. 1070. 1071. 1072. 1073. 1074. 1075. 1076. 1077. 1078. 1079. 1080. 1081. 1082. 1083. 1084. 1085. 1086. 1087. 1088. 1089. 1090. 1091. 1092. 1093. 1094. 1095. 1096. 1097. 1098. 1099. 1100. 1101. 1102. 1103. 1104. 1105. 1106. 1107. 1108. 1109. 1110. 1111. 1112. 1113. 1114. 1115. 1116. 1117. 1118. 1119. 1120. 1121. 1122. 1123. 1124. 1125. 1126. 1127. 1128. 1129. 1130. 1131. 1132. 1133. 1134. 1135. 1136. 1137. 1138. 1139. 1140. 1141. 1142. 1143. 1144. 1145. 1146. 1147. 1148. 1149. 1150. 1151. 1152. 1153. 1154. 1155. 1156. 1157. 1158. 1159. 1160. 1161. 1162. 1163. 1164. 1165. 1166. 1167. 1168. 1169. 1170. 1171. 1172. 1173. 1174. 1175. 1176. 1177. 1178. 1179. 1180. 1181. 1182. 1183. 1184. 1185. 1186. 1187. 1188. 1189. 1190. 1191. 1192. 1193. 1194. 1195. 1196. 1197. 1198. 1199. 1200. 1201. 1202. 1203. 1204. 1205. 1206. 1207. 1208. 1209. 1210. 1211. 1212. 1213. 1214. 1215. 1216. 1217. 1218. 1219. 1220. 1221. 1222. 1223. 1224. 1225. 1226. 1227. 1228. 1229. 1230. 1231. 1232. 1233. 1234. 1235. 1236. 1237. 1238. 1239. 1240. 1241. 1242. 1243. 1244. 1245. 1246. 1247. 1248. 1249. 1250. 1251. 1252. 1253. 1254. 1255. 1256. 1257. 1258. 1259. 1260. 1261. 1262. 1263. 1264. 1265. 1266. 1267. 1268. 1269. 1270. 1271. 1272. 1273. 1274. 1275. 1276. 1277. 1278. 1279. 1280. 1281. 1282. 1283. 1284. 1285. 1286. 1287. 1288. 1289. 1290. 1291. 1292. 1293. 1294. 1295. 1296. 1297. 1298. 1299. 1300. 1301. 1302. 1303. 1304. 1305. 1306. 1307. 1308. 1309. 1310. 1311. 1312. 1313. 1314. 1315. 1316. 1317. 1318. 1319. 1320. 1321. 1322. 1323. 1324. 1325. 1326. 1327. 1328. 1329. 1330. 1331. 1332. 1333. 1334. 1335. 1336. 1337. 1338. 1339. 1340. 1341. 1342. 1343. 1344. 1345. 1346. 1347. 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1514. 1515. 1516. 1517. 1518. 1519. 1520. 1521. 1522. 1523. 1524. 1525. 1526. 1527. 1528. 1529. 1530. 1531. 1532. 1533. 1534. 1535. 1536. 1537. 1538. 1539. 1540. 1541. 1542. 1543. 1544. 1545. 1546. 1547. 1548. 1549. 1550. 1551. 1552. 1553. 1554. 1555. 1556. 1557. 1558. 1559. 1560. 1561. 1562. 1563. 1564. 1565. 1566. 1567. 1568. 1569. 1570. 1571. 1572. 1573. 1574. 1575. 1576. 1577. 1578. 1579. 1580. 1581. 1582. 1583. 1584. 1585. 1586. 1587. 1588. 1589. 1590. 1591. 1592. 1593. 1594. 1595. 1596. 1597. 1598. 1599. 1600. 1601. 1602. 1603. 1604. 1605. 1606. 1607. 1608. 1609. 1610. 1611. 1612. 1613. 1614. 1615. 1616. 1617. 1618. 1619. 1620. 1621. 1622. 1623. 1624. 1625. 1626. 1627. 1628. 1629. 1630. 1631. 1632. 1633. 1634. 1635. 1636. 1637. 1638. 1639. 1640. 1641. 1642. 1643. 1644. 1645. 1646. 1647. 1648. 1649. 1650. 1651. 1652. 1653. 1654. 1655. 1656. 1657. 1658. 1659. 1660. 1661. 1662. 1663. 1664. 1665. 1666. 1667. 1668. 1669. 1670. 1671. 1672. 1673. 1674. 1675. 1676. 1677. 1678. 1679. 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1846. 1847. 1848. 1849. 1850. 1851. 1852. 1853. 1854. 1855. 1856. 1857. 1858. 1859. 1860. 1861. 1862. 1863. 1864. 1865. 1866. 1867. 1868. 1869. 1870. 1871. 1872. 1873. 1874. 1875. 1876. 1877. 1878. 1879. 1880. 1881. 1882. 1883. 1884. 1885. 1886. 1887. 1888. 1889. 1890. 1891. 1892. 1893. 1894. 1895. 1896. 1897. 1898. 1899. 1900. 1901. 1902. 1903. 1904. 1905. 1906. 1907. 1908. 1909. 1910. 1911. 1912. 1913. 1914. 1915. 1916. 1917. 1918. 1919. 1920. 1921. 1922. 1923. 1924. 1925. 1926. 1927. 1928. 1929. 1930. 1931. 1932. 1933. 1934. 1935. 1936. 1937. 1938. 1939. 1940. 1941. 1942. 1943. 1944. 1945. 1946. 1947. 1948. 1949. 1950. 1951. 1952. 1953. 1954. 1955. 1956. 1957. 1958. 1959. 1960. 1961. 1962. 1963. 1964. 1965. 1966. 1967. 1968. 1969. 1970. 1971. 1972. 1973. 1974. 1975. 1976. 1977. 1978. 1979. 1980. 1981. 1982. 1983. 1984. 1985. 1986. 1987. 1988. 1989. 1990. 1991. 1992. 1993. 1994. 1995. 1996. 1997. 1998. 1999. 2000. 2001. 2002. 2003. 2004. 2005. 2006. 2007. 2008. 2009. 2010. 2011. 2012. 2013. 2014. 2015. 2016. 2017. 2018. 2019. 2020. 2021. 2022. 2023. 2024. 2025. 2026. 2027. 2028. 2029. 2030. 2031. 2032. 2033. 2034. 2035. 2036. 2037. 2038. 2039. 2040. 2041. 2042. 2043. 2044. 2045. 2046. 2047. 2048. 2049. 2050. 2051. 2052. 2053. 2054. 2055. 2056. 2057. 2058. 2059. 2060. 2061. 2062. 2063. 2064. 2065. 2066. 2067. 2068. 2069. 2070. 2071. 2072. 2073. 2074. 2075. 2076. 2077. 2078. 2079. 2080. 2081. 2082. 2083. 2084. 2085. 2086. 2087. 2088. 2089. 2090. 2091. 2092. 2093. 2094. 2095. 2096. 2097. 2098. 2099. 2100. 2101. 2102. 2103. 2104. 2105. 2106. 2107. 2108. 2109. 2110. 2111. 2112. 2113. 2114. 2115. 2116. 2117. 2118. 2119. 2120. 2121. 2122. 2123. 2124. 2125. 2126. 2127. 2128. 2129. 2130. 2131. 2132. 2133. 2134. 2135. 2136. 2137. 2138. 2139. 2140. 2141. 2142. 2143. 2144. 2145. 2146. 2147. 2148. 2149. 2150. 2151. 2152. 2153. 2154. 2155. 2156. 2157. 2158. 2159. 2160. 2161. 2162. 2163. 2164. 2165. 2166. 2167. 2168. 2169. 2170. 2171. 2172. 2173. 2174. 2175. 2176. 2177. 2178. 2179. 2180. 2181. 2182. 2183. 2184. 2185.

ever have Prophecies from these persons very good cheap. Whereas when the Spirit of wisdom incited the holy men of old, their words were weighed in a balance, their discourses consequent, their seasons of Prophecy few and chosen, and their Doctrine precious as the gold of Ophir.

While I thus save the strange phenomena about these Vulgar Prophets by the powers of Melancholy; I intend not to deny but that the Devil (who works by darkness as God by light) may sometimes interpose, and where he finds the Mind fitted by this distemper for him to work upon, may (to make the imposture more fine and subtil) act it to some expressions beyond the bare capacities of this juggling humor, as to speak languages, to tell some things at distance, as the certain coming of such a friend or Epileptick fit, upon such a day or hour (which the German Prophetess *Christina* often did.) It seems to have been the received opinion of the Ancient *Jews* that an high Melancholy or distraction was attended alway with an evil Spirit. whence that speech of theirs concerning our Savior. \* *He hath a Devil and is mad*, upon which Text Mr *Mead* tells us that they used to stile their *Melancholici* and *Maniaci* בעלי שרים or Δαίμονες. And according to the strain of all

\* Joh. 10. 20.





CHAP. VII.

*Probable Arguments to prove all divine Prophecy now ceast.*

*The Cessation of Prophecy now, nor absolutely asserted, and why. Five reasons alleged to prove its cessation, probable. A promise of Prophecy to any Age, the greatest security that it is not imposed upon by Pretenders to it. No promise of Prophecy made to the ends of the World. The several ends Prophecy served to under the times of the Old and New Testament: proved unserviceable to any such ends now. Why Prophecy not given now to comfort good men in affliction. Why it expired in the Jewish Church so long before our Saviors coming. Several reasons alleged against the received Opinion of a Bath Kol following to Prophecy under the second Temple. The Original of that Speech of Strabo, that Moses advanced himself by the promise of a Religion without Sacrifice or Prophecy, guest at. Such a Religion proved the felicity of this New Dispensation.*

Consid. 6.

**T**HE last Consideration which I shall superadd to disparage the faith of these Vulgar Prophecies is this. *It seems highly probable that the true Prophetick Spirit is now gone up, and that all divine Revelations, as well of future Events as new Doctrines, are wholly ceast in the Church of God.* I shall not be positive in this Assertion, because I find a Synod convened in Germany, Anno 1633. where the Divines being moved by some zealous persons to declare themselves against all pretended Revelations and Prophecies, now that God had

So eminently refused the famous Visions of  
Cæsar and Christina Boniatavia in the un-  
expected deaths of Gustavus of Sweden and  
Frederick of Bohemia, prophesied of by  
them, as the Saviors and Restorers of the  
German Protestants; They declined it, ad-  
ding, that yet no Church, or Consistory or  
University had altogether rejected or condemn-  
ed, such kind of new Prophecies, and why  
would we be the First? Certainly then 'twill  
very ill become my privacy and obscurity, to  
take the Chair and pronounce confidently  
that folly is with them all, and that there is  
nothing of Divine Prophecy now in the  
world besides the vain noise and affectation  
thereof. I shall only crave the freedom to  
render those reasons which make it seem pro-  
bable to my self that there are no such extra-  
ordinary visits of the Divine Spirit now to  
be found in the world. Whereof the first is  
this:

*Nondum ul-  
lam Ecclesiam,  
aut Consisto-  
rium, vel Aca-  
demiã, novas  
id genus pro-  
phetias penitus  
rejecisse, aut  
condemnasse:  
nos cur primi  
esse vellemus?  
Hist Revel. per  
J. A. C. p. 131*

I. God hath by no Promise encouraged our  
Expectation of any such prophetick inspira-  
tion in these latter Ages of the World.  
When ever God gave Prophecy to his  
Church, as it usually came attended with  
some other eminent gifts, whereby men  
might understand it was an Age of Extraor-  
dinaries; so it was alway ushered by some  
promise thereof. God gave Prophecy to  
the Church of the Old Testament, and to  
the

*Reas. 1.*

1 Act. 2. 17.

Deut. 18.

Joel. 2. 32.

the Times wherein our Saviour was first manifested and preached to the world. *Christ the last days*, being the expiring times of the Jewish Oeconomy, and there was notice given thereof by a fore-telling Promise delivered by *Moses* and *Joel*. God would not have so great a gift, that comes forth (as all extraordinary ones do) upon some errand of import, to steal into the world, and men be in danger of losing the benefit thereof, while destitute of any thing to resolve them whether there be any *re-formation*, *Holy Ghost* thus given yea or no. Besides, where we have no special promise, we have no ground at all of expectation or trust, and if we trust our Faith with any pretended Prophecy and Revelation though presented with all the probable appearances of truth, before we know whether God hath made promise of any such matter now, we do but tempe God, and expect he should charge himself with us while we walk in *preceptum*, in waies wherein he never told us we should meet him. A Promise from God in this matter, is (I think) one of the most necessary securities to our faith. There were under the times of the Old Testament undoubtedly, as many persons inspired only by the Spirit of heated Melancholy, and more by a much worse, than now there are; but that which was the great security to the minds

minds of good men then, that they were not deceived by any of the gilded Prophecies then current among them, was, that God had made them a Promise to send them Prophets from time to time to resolve them in all matters relating to this life as well as the other: and therefore they might presume the Providence of God would be more especially watchful to preserve them (if not greatly wanting to themselves) from being finally abused while expecting instruction by a Prophecy; a way of divine Sanction in those times. In confidence especially of this divine security, we find even Princes proceeding without scruple to action, and in matters of very great moment, upon the bare word of a Person that pretended to speak from God, though without any Sign (that we read of) given to seal his Mission from God upon that occasion; whereas now a Prince would but fall the Martyr of his own credulity, if trusting his affairs with the most importunate voices of a pretending Prophet against sober Reasons of State, when there appears neither divine Sign, nor promise of Prophecy, to warrant his Faith.

It is readily acknowledged, that none of God's true Prophets but came attested at one time or other with some divine Signs; but yet he that shall consider that these

71.2.5A.1

81.1110C.11

11.2.1001

See 2 King.

9.11, 12, 13.

2 Chro. 20. 14.

15, 16, 17, 18.

2 Chro. 25. 7.

8, 9, 10.

were





think that the Prophetick Spirit is flown  
back to Heaven (like *Elijah*) and hath left  
nothing behind it, but its mantle, its garb and  
duds, which Imposture sometimes walks up  
and down the World withal. As for that place  
of Scripture so often alledged by the Modern  
Enthusiasts, to justify the Expectation of  
Prophecy now, *It shall come to pass in the* Joel 2. 28.  
*last days that I will pour out my Spirit upon*  
*all flesh, and your sons and your daughters*  
*shall prophesie, &c.* it is wholly impertinent,  
because, as *Theodoret* notes, it received its  
evident and literal accomplishment at the  
day of Pentecost. But a greater then  
*Theodoret* is here, *S. Peter*, who expressly  
bearn the accomplishment of that Prophe-  
cy in the liberal effusions of the extraordi-  
nary gifts of the Spirit upon that great Day  
where we may note by the way, that he  
seems not to understand the place of Pro-  
phesy strictly taken (for Prediction) in favor  
of which alone it is alledged by our Adver-  
saries, but for those other extraordinary gifts  
of the Spirit there mentioned, and for which  
Prophecy doth often suppose elsewhere in  
Scripture.

Τὸ τὸ ἀνα-  
παύσει καὶ δι-  
αφύσηται καὶ  
ἡμεῖς καὶ  
Πνεύματος  
τὸ πνεῦμα  
ἐδίδετο.  
Comment.  
in loc.

Act. 2. 16, 17

*All other extraordinary gifts which*  
*anciently attended the Prophetick Spirit, are*  
*now ceased.* The gifts of healing, of work-  
ing Miracles, of discerning of Spirits, of dis-  
vers Tongues, of interpretation of Scripture,  
have

Reas. 2.

1 Cor. 12. 10.

have all expired with their occasion; and why should we imagine that Prophecy (numbered with them) survives them all; a gift of which I am sure the World hath incomparably less need then of any of the rest. Those other gifts of the Spirit could ease the pains, enlighten the Eyes, resolve the Conscience, presently confirm the Faith of men, which a Prophecy could not do: and therefore whereas we find those gifts very familiarly used, and liberally conferred in the first times of the Gospel, yet we meet with this prophetick gift very rarely exerted by our Savior or his Apostles; and some of the Persons who had it (as if they were rarely to be found) are particularly mentioned in the New Testament; viz. Agabus, Barnabas, Simon Niger, Lucius, Manahen, Saba, the four Daughters of Philip, and some few others. Why then should a Gift, which was of so little name and consideration in compare with the rest, continue in the Church when all the other (like Scaffolds when the House is built) are taken away, now that the House of God is built up, and the Faith confirmed? Certainly the fond affection which some men have for Prophecy, and that strength of face with which others pretend to it, are the things which suborn their Understandings to believe that so acceptable a gift is honored with a longer continuance in

Acts 13.1.

in the World then the rest of its Brethren. If we consult *Antiquity*, it will appear more likely that this gift alone is false, there being more frequent mention therein of some Miracles wrought in the Name of Christ, but less is said concerning the Prophetic Spirit, especially after the second Century.

*V. Mr. Smith  
Disc. of Pro-  
phes. p. 272.*

Prophecy cannot now minister to any of those great ends, to which under the first times of the Old and New Testament it did. It stood under the Old Testament as a seal of the divine Inspiration of those Scriptures, in which it was found; and was a pregnant assurance to present and future Times, that all those Promises, Precepts, Threatnings, found in conjunction with any accomplished Prophecy, were equally of divine Original.

*Reas. 3.*

To this purpose speaks a Jewish Doctor, *ἡμεῖς οὐκ ἔχομεν προφητείαν* The fundamental Reason why Prophecy is extant in the Prophets, is only this, That they may with the greater authority exhort men to an observation of the Law, to divine Worship, and to do what is acceptable unto God, and that Man may be perfect with God, not barely that they may declare things to come. This is found in the Prophets but out of a secondary intention, only to confirm the truth of their inspiration, and the like reason of Prophecy in Scripture is alledged by *Origen*. Whereas these

*Author Seph.  
IK. l. 3. c. 8.  
ap. Vois. in  
Pug. Fid.  
p. 101.*

*Orig. l. 7.  
cont. Cels.  
p. 338. Ed.  
Cantabr.*

*Vulgar*

Vulgar Prophecies cannot (need not) teach any divine Doctrine or part of Scripture if they could be fulfilled; and therefore have no more real value then the seal in separation from the writing. They tell us, perhaps (which no wise man much concerns himself to know) that after such a period of time, such a great Prince shall ascend the Throne, such a famous Event shall fall; and if the Prediction chance to succeed, the Prophet looks big, and the People wonder, and that's all. Moreover, Prophecy served (like the *Shechinah* in the Temple) as a testimony of God's dwelling in and owning of the Church in which it was found. And accordingly the departing of the Prophetick Spirit from a people, if found elsewhere in the World, was a Sign God had given them a bill of divorce. Thus God at last assured his rejection of the Jewish and acknowledgment of the Gentile Church, by his taking Prophecy wholly from the one, and giving it at the same time unto the other; that which *Origen* and *Justin Martyr* take frequent notice of in their Disputes against the Jews and Heathens. Now Prophecy is no more necessary in this Age then Miracles to witness Christs presence with his Church, for she hath had it liberally already; and when it departed, it went not from her to Jew or Turk, but back to Heaven, leaving behind

u Eccus. 36.

15.

Rev. 19. 10.

Luk. 7. 16.

Joel 2. 28.

Joel 2. 28.

Joel 2. 28.

Joel 2. 28.

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Joel 2. 28.



behind it the many virtues of the Spirit, in themselves more undoubted pledges of his favor. And besides, the Christian Church now is crumbled into so many Sects and Forms, that were Prophecy now in the World, men would be apt to receive it as a testimony, not to their Church, but to their Party (to which purpose the Faction of Rome pretends it,) and therefore perhaps Prophecy was to be found in the more united times both of the Jewish and Christian Church, but went away when they began to distinguish themselves by little Forms and Notions, lest it should seem to witness not to the Truth of God, but humors of Men.

A third Reason assigned by some Jewish and Christian Writers, why God gave the People of the Jews their Oracles and Prophets to give them the knowledge of Futurities, as the success of a Battel, the issue of a Sicknes, the condition of other Kingdoms in after-times, &c. is this; Because else in all likelihood they would have apostatized to the Rites of the Heathen, who had their Oracles and Diviners. *and again in 2<sup>d</sup> ad Rom. viii. 26. & y<sup>e</sup> wisdom of y<sup>e</sup> law & y<sup>e</sup> covenants* being prompted therunto by that natural liquorousness in the minds of men after the knowledge of things to come, as *1<sup>o</sup> Origen* gives the reason, and *Scripture* seems

*y<sup>e</sup> Deut. prophe-  
tas mittendo  
fecit ne opus  
haberemus A-  
strologis &  
divinatoribus  
& ariolis,  
quoniam illos  
consultere pos-  
sumus, &c.*

*Maimon. apud  
D. Pineda  
P. M. p. 106*

*2 Orig. cont.  
Cels. l. i. p. 28.  
l. 3. p. 113.  
a Deut. 18.  
14, 15.*

b 1 Sam. 28.

6, 7.

c 2 Kin. 1. 2.

to assign the same why God gave them Prophecy, even to secure them from all temptation to consult the Oracles of the Heathen, which we find they sometimes did in the silence or absence of the true Prophets. To suppose Prophecy necessary now for this end, to save mens longing after the knowledge of things sealed up in the Counsels of God, is to reproach the World, and to suppose it as liquorish as in its more childish years. Hath not the World out-grown the follies of Auguries, Soothsaying, and profest Diviners long ago, and took up in the resolves of Reason, as the best Oracle to consult in a civil business? and must Christians be thought the onely persons that want a Prophecy to arrest their anxieties in reference to hereafter, and a Prophecy of the certain Truth whereof they are as much unresolved as of the issue of affairs? And besides, we shall observe how God sometimes chastised that wanton humor in the Jews, by permitting even his own Predictions to be, not seldom, the occasions of very evil Effects.

d 2 King. 8.

13, 14, 16.

2 King. 20. 10.

1 King. 11.

31, 40.

If we proceed to a view of those Ends which prophecy serv'd to more specially in the times of the New Testament, it will more clearly appear a great impertinence now. It serv'd then as a divine largess to grace the solemn Inauguration of our Savior to his Mediatory Kingdom:

Kingdoms. To assure the acceptance of his person and undertaking with God, who empowered him to confer such great gifts on men. To fore-warn and so to fore-arm young Converts, against otherwise to be scandalized by the then approaching persecutions for Christ's sake. To seal the reception of the *Gentiles* to the dignity of Sonship, upon whom God had bestowed so great a portion of his Spirit. To prefer the Christian Oeconomy to as sacred regards with men as the *Jewish* had of old, because attended with as liberal an effusion of all extraordinary gifts upon men, as that was. Now it were greatly to under-rate the Reader's time and my own, to prove Prophecy in this Age utterly unnecessary for the service of any such ends as these. So that there appears not any sufficient Reason why we should believe there are any Examples of the Prophetick Spirit now extant in the World. Miracles and Prophecies always came forth from God to serve some great occasions, (his Servants never wrought a Miracle, or fore-told an Event, as Juglers shew tricks, or Gypsies tell fortunes, onely to cause wonder or to supply discourse :) now these occasions being long ago expired, it is but reasonable to presume that Miracles and Prophecies are false with them.

To all this perhaps it will be opposed,  
I  
That

That oft-times a very black and tedious night of affliction covers the Servants of God, and that a Prophecy might then serve as the voice of the Cock to bring the joyful news of an approaching morning of deliverance, and that for this end also God often favored his ancient People the Jews with Prophecy, even to let them understand when their miseries should determine, lest they should grow weary and faint in their minds.

I answer; God hath now supplied good men with higher cordials than a Prophecy to support their sinking spirits with in a day of Evil. He hath confirmed his singular affection to them by the great gift of his Son; he hath told them that all things shall work together for their temporal or eternal good; that they have a merciful High Priest that is touch'd with a feeling of all their infirmities, that their light affliction which is but for a moment works for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and are not these Considerations better to them than ten Prophecies? Besides, God having now caused the felicities of the other World to stand before us in so full a light, he would have our minds less intangled with solicitous and unquiet thoughts about the uncertainties of this. It greatly becomes us now to be more heroical and manly in our hopes

and

and resolutions then the Jews were; whose temper was as weak, worldly and carnal, as their way of Worship; in compliance with which God encouraged their service by a Covenant made up of worldly Promises, possession of the Land, the abundance of all things, freedom from evils and bondage. Now, lest in a tedious affliction they should think God had forgotten his Covenant, and should cast about for some new Master, the Prophets were sent from time to time, to resolve them of the cause and continuance thereof, and (that their patience might not tire) to tell them when their warfare should be accomplish'd. Besides, their notices of the felicities of the other World, being so obscure and languishing, might easily render them to greater impatience of the undetermined miseries of this: and therefore when in the times of the second Temple they began to be more clear in the Doctrine of a Resurrection and a life to come, Prophecies of a temporal reference became more rare; as appears from the words of that Psalm, *Ps. 74. 9.* written (it is thought) after the Captivity, where the Church under great pressures thus bemoans her self: *We see not our Signs, there is no more any Prophet, neither is there any among us that knoweth how long:* which words suggest to us a fourth Reason.

239  
bns  
I 2  
for

Reas. 4.



for two or three hundred years before the coming of our Savior. This is a truth of catholic acknowledgment, all Jewish and Christian Writers confess it but only *Justin Martyr*, who once and again<sup>f</sup> tells *Typho* the Jew, *There never ceased in your Nation, either Prophet or Prince till Jesus Christ was both born and had suffered.* But in this Opinion that excellent Man stands against all the Ancients, and against <sup>g</sup> Canon and <sup>h</sup> *Apocrypha*; and therefore his Testimony not binding. Now if Prophecy ceased then, we have no reason to presume it continues now; for what ever Arguments seem to conclude it necessary to the *Christian Church* now, would with much more strength conclude the necessity of it to the *Jewish* then: for the Scripture was then more dark and incomplete then now, the People were of a more weak and worldly temper, the Oeconomy more carnal, the Age more accustomed to Prophecies, Men more in danger of being tempted by the absence of Prophecy to consult the Devil's Prophets and Oracles, then so frequent in the World, and a succession of Prophets more fully promised without any limitation of time, then now. Besides, the reason of its cessation seems to have been catholic, viz, this: It had now ministred to all those great Ends to which it was thought necessary in the Times

f Οὐδέποτε  
ἐν τῷ γένει  
ὑμῶν ἐπαύ-  
σατο ἕτερος  
φῆμις ἕτερος  
ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι  
ἀρχὴν ἔλα-  
βε, μέχους  
ἔσθ' Ἰησοῦς  
Χριστός καὶ  
γένερε καὶ  
ἐπαύσατο.

Dialog. cum  
Typh. p. 211.  
c. 245.

g Psal. 74. 9.

h 1 Mac. 9. 27.

4. 46.

14. 41.

to which it was vouchsafed; and therefore (as it is said of *David*) having thus served its Generation, it fell asleep. For though it be true that the cessation of Prophecy, as also the absence of the many Glories from the Second Temple which the First had, might serve to take men off from looking too intently upon the face of *Moses*, whose splendor plainly appeared to be nigh to vanishing away, and to quicken their desires after the more inward and abiding Glories of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, and to cause them to expect that New Dispensation so long promised before, which should restore the Prophetical Spirit more abundantly; yet I conceive this to be neither the onely nor the principal Reason of that long *interstitium* of Prophecy in the *Jewish* Church. For the Ark, the *Shechinah*, the heavenly fire, and the rest, were ceremonial appendices, and served the pomp and splendor of that Lower Dispensation, the utter absence whereof from the second Temple might shew that Oeconomy now waxing old and wearing away; but Prophecy lasted (it is concluded) for at least forty or fifty years under the second Temple, and besides was given rather for Moral then Ceremonial Ends, which having sufficiently served, it was beneath the sacredness thereof to be continued to serve onely the pomp of the Church,

*The Vanity of* CAP. 7.  
or the curiosities of Men.

The onely thing now occuring to my thoughts, which may seem to weaken the force of this Reason, is the common Opinion of a *קול ברק* *Filia vocis*, a soft voice, heard as descending from Heaven, and was (say the Masters) a lower degree of Prophecy continuing under the Times of the second Temple as a kind of twilight in the Jewish Church after the setting of the Sun of Prophecy; and to which the *Targum* is thought sometimes to refer. But as for this prophetick voice, I see no great reason why we should stick to number it with those Jewish Fables mentioned *Tar. i. 14.* and invented (as many more were) to serve the glory of that Nation, and to greaten the favor of Heaven thereunto: there being no two Nations so much remarked for vanity and pride, both in sacred and profane Writings, as the Jewish and Grecian; and there are none that have so corrupted Histories, and obtruded so many Legends upon the credulity of the World, to inhanse the credit and reputation of their own People. Can it easily be thought that God would now speak from Heaven to them who had turned the deaf ear to all his Prophets, and were now so addicted to Magick, Superstition, and all the Examples of Folly and Profaneness? What reason can

*Targum. in  
Cantic. cap. i.*

be given why God should silence all the Prophets, the Oracles by *Urim*, and by *Visions*, and honor that obdurate People by any immediate addresses? What higher Grace did God confer upon *Abraham*, upon *Moses*, nay upon his Son, then to speak to them by a Voice from the excellent Glory? What are all the occasions, upon which they say it was heard, but weak and trifling, and evidently unworthy of so sacred an Oracle? When *Jonathan* began his Paraphrase, they tell us he was check'd by a *Bath Kol*, saying, *Quis est ille qui revelat filiis hominum mysteria Legis?* When *Rab. Juda Sanctus* died, the *Talmudists* tell us, *Bath Kol beatitudinem eum plangentibus pronuntiavit*, and the like. Besides, a Voice from Heaven seems reserved as the more sacred way of divine Revelation (so far is it from being the lowest degree of Prophecy) for the Times of the Gospel. It was a Voice from Heaven that gave testimony to Christ, that occasioned *S. Paul's* Conversion; and it is urged as a strong argument against refusing the Gospel, because it is a turning away from him that speaketh from Heaven: And we shall observe that all the Prophecies of the Old Testament have not that Expression, *I heard a Voice from Heaven*, so oft as that single Prophecy of the New, the Revelation. God generally making use of o-

kV. Christoph.  
Helvic. de  
Paraph. Chald.  
p. 121

Id. Lightfoot  
Hor. Hebr.  
p. 149.

m Mat. 3. 17.  
Joh. 12. 28.

n Heb. 12. 25.

ther ways before, to give his Prophets an intimation of his Counsels: So that this Notion cannot greatly prejudice the Reason alledged, having so little color of truth to recommend it. Nor am I alone in this perswasion, finding some learned men speaking very doubtfully of it, and others very confidently against it. Though perhaps all this be more then I need have said, for this was no personal Prophecy, nor (that I can find) ever asserted to declare things to come, but to direct in some emergent difficulties in common life.

o Vocale Responsum quod

לוקא

dicatur, sub

secundo Templo fuisse, nul

lo idoneo testimonio po

test compro

bati, quamvis

Fudæi contra pertendant. Molin. Vat. l. i. c. 26.

p Credamne ego Deum

Populo tam dirâ apostasiâ laboranti, ita indulgentem, ut e colo cum tñ sa-

miliariter colloqui dignaretur, atque iis Oracula tam sublimia exhibere,

tanque frequentia ut non paria Prophetis? &c. R. Dr. Lightfoot, Hor.

Hebr. p. 63.

In confirmation of what hath been said, 'twere easy to superadd the many Testimonies of the Ancients to prove the going up of the Prophetick Spirit in this confirm'd State of the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, who are so full in this perswasion, that (as 'tis noted) the *Montanists* are by some of the Fathers proved to be no better then Dissemblers when they pretended to the Gift of Prophecy, for that it was then ceased in the Church. But that I seem not to boast in another Man's line, I shall dismiss this Chapter with a Conjecture upon a passage

q See their se-

veral Testi-

monies in Mr.

Smith's Disc.

of the Church.

p. 170.

in



in *Strabo* applicable to our present purpose. He, coming to speak of *Moses* and some Jewish Customs, makes (after the manner of the Heathen) a very invidious relation of what Arts he used to oblige so great a multitude his Followers. One of which, he saith was a promise to deliver to them, *Such a worship, and such rites of Sacrifice, as should not trouble the Users of them with any great expenses, nor propheticall raptures and ecstasies, nor any other absurd businesses in Religion.* A Speech that assures *Strabo* not over-fond of such things himself, for else he could not so easily have believed a promise of deliverance from them, the best bait *Moses* could use to catch the hearts of the Multitude withall. But certain it is that no promise was further from his thoughts then this; for his law was a law of rites and costly sacrifices, and his great wish was that all the Lords people were Prophets, and nothing that himself more pretended or promised then Prophecy. I conceive therefore that (as most lies bottom upon some truth) this Relation was originally but some traditional prophecy of the State of the times under the *Messiah* current (among some others) among the Jews, or else a right opinion of theirs founded in a mistaken Sense of that Prophecy of *Daniel* concerning the *Messiah*, that He should seal up Vision and

Τοις τὸν σὲ-  
βασμὸν καὶ  
τοιαύτω ἐ-  
ροποιῖαν, ἥ τις  
ἐδὲ δα πάντα  
ὁχλήσῃ τὸν  
Χραμῶν, καὶ  
τε θεοροοῦ-  
αι, καὶ ἄλλοις  
περὶ γυμνασίας  
ἐπιποιεῖν,  
Geogr. l. 16.

Heb. 9. 10.  
Eph. 2. 15.

Deut. 18. 15.  
18.

Dan. 9. 24.

27.

Pro-

*Prophecy and cause sacrifice and oblation to cease.* Now this notion of the ceasing of Prophecy and Sacrifice might (as some other did) arrive at last among the Gentiles, who understanding it to halves, might easily intitle *Moses* to the promise thereof, a Person of so great Name both among the *Jews* and themselves.

But a freedom from these two is, if not the promise, the performance only of the *Mediator* of a better Covenant than *Moses*, who by the offering of himself to God left place for no other then *Jesus Christ*, the living sacrifice of our selves to God; and by the more liberal effusions of his Spirit to enlighten our minds, and to place our hearts above the fears and hopes of this world, hath made Prophecy less necessary now, and therefore most likely not be at all therein. Sure I am God hath no where promised it to the ends of the World, nor do men most disposed, by great wisdom and Sanctity, to receive it, either feel it or desire it, and all that ever have, with the greatest wariness, trusted to it, have been at last clothed with shame and confusion; and God in his Providence seems to deliver all pretences to it to persons so extremely ignorant, vicious, vain or hypochondrical, that 'tis become a scandal to profess it, & for a man to pretend an Enthusiasm now, gives notice that he wants a Physician;

lician, whereas heretofore his greatest judgments Miracles and signs came to secure the honor of Prophecy, and of those excellent Persons which profess it.

Now there is scarce any Man but hath a quick sense of the happiness of being freed from a Religion made grievous by so many chargeable sacrifices as the Jewish was: and whoso considers that it was so hard to distinguish true Prophecy from false even in that Age to which it was promised, that often the People, and <sup>x</sup> sometimes the true Prophets were abused by the Pretenders to it, and that it could not but have some uneasinesses therein, while attended with those vehement transports, consternations, tremors, ænigmatical Visions, and that harshness which the most gentle strokes *the hand of God* made upon the faculties of those holy men which were acted by it, cannot but value it as a happiness that God hath delivered us now to the conduct only of that *sure word of Prophecy*, the Scripture, and the evident and gentle *Maxims* of Right Reason.

x 1 King: 13.

18, 19. y Isa. 21. 3.

Gen. 15. 12.

Dan. 10. 8.

Jer. 23. 9.

## CHAP. VIII.

## The Conclusion.

Private persons not Competent Judges of Prophecy, and why. The Decree of Pope Leo touching New Prophets commended. Men formerly and still subject to be imposed upon by seeming Miracles. The discrediting of these Prophecies of great advantage to the Church.

**L**Est these Considerations should not be thought sufficient to disparage that easy faith which private men usually meet these Vulgar prophecies withall; I shall further mind the Reader, that Prophecy is in it self and so hath been judged by wise men a matter too nice and subtile for any, much less for men that occupy  $\text{ἡ τὸν τὴν ἰδιωτου}$ , the room of the unlearned in the Church, to make an hasty judgment in. Therefore (as was noted before from *Plato*) the Laws in the *Gracian Commonwealth*, appointed  $\text{ἐν ταῖς ἐνδεσὶς μυσταῖς καὶ ταῖς}$  some publick Judges over *Enthusiastick prophecies*: which institution, whatever further end the State aimed at therein, proceeded upon this acknowledged principle, That Prophecy was in the source and sense thereof too perplex and dark a business for the ruder minds of private men to make any steady judgment in.

And therefore as passionately as the *Romish Church* laies claim to the *Spirit of Prophecy*,

phesy, as the testimony of God to her, yet upon occasion of some Enthusiasts which would define the particular time of the Day of judgment, we find a very severe and punctual Decree made by Pope Leo to limit the judgment of such Persons, the sum whereof is this.

<sup>a</sup> If God have revealed some things to come to any of them, we will by no means that they be presently reputed Impostors, or any way disturbed, (against the Apostolical command of not despising Prophesyings)

but <sup>b</sup> we will that by an Ordinary law all such asserted inspirations before they be published

or preached to the people, be from henceforth

understood reserved solely to the cognizance of

the Apostolical Chair. But if that may not be

without some danger of delay, and an urgent

necessity advise otherwise, then that they be

notified to the Ordinary of the place, that he

taking with him three or four grave and lear-

ned men, and having diligently examined the

whole business with them, when they shall judge

it convenient (upon which we charge their

own Consciences) they may give licence for

the publication of them. And after many other

Proviso's in this affair, the whole is concluded

with a severe temporal and spiritual punishment

threatned upon the offenders in the

premises. Should appear *ictus Piscator*, the

Pope once stricken by such apish prophets

became wise, and would no longer entrust

the

<sup>a</sup> Caterum, si quibusdam eorum Dominum futura quædam in Dei Ecclesia inspiratione quædam revelaverit, &c.

Concil. Later. Sub. Leon. 10. Sess. 11.

<sup>b</sup> Volumus ut lege ordinaria tales assertæ inspirationes, antequam publicentur aut aut populo prædicentur, ex nunc Apostolica sedis examini reservatæ intelligantur, &c.



the judgment of them with the soft and ignorant Multitude.

Now Prophecy hath been thus wisely reserved to the cognizance of Persons of more exercised minds, because humane Nature undisciplin'd is so extremely prone to meet things pompos and vehement with very sacred and solemn thoughts, and to think (as the frogs in the fable, by the block which fell among them) if the person make a great noise and bustle, come attended with flaming expressions, petherical devotions, singularities of gesture and phrase, affected silences and severities, that he is *Διοτμος* sent from God extraordinarily, to rule in their minds and lives. Besides, men that have no notices of the compass of natural or diabolical operation, are ready to receive the sudden tremors, frequent ecstasies and other works which fall not within the little circle of their observation, as the powers of God and examples Miraculous. And this they may be the more easily tempted to do, because though sometimes the signs these Prophets shew are so thin and weak that the dullest eye may see through them, and discover them to be the delusions of the Devil or Melancholy (such was that of *Drabirius* and many of *Apollonius*), yet sometimes juggling Prophets have acted a Miracle so to the life, that even wise men have been imposed upon by the fine and

subtil

*d Zeli excessu  
signum ali-  
quod (ut Ge-  
dconi vel Ma-  
ria) dari in-  
stanter petiit  
Drabic. da-  
tumque est  
Frontis pun-  
ctura & velut  
igne ambusta  
facies (risum  
teneatis?)  
Histon. Drab.  
per. J. A. C.  
p. 143*

subtle management of the imposture, as may appear by that Chapter in *Tamblour's* entitled *Miracula multa sunt Prophecie*, and other writers.

If all these considerations might obtain with men to give no faith or (which is next to it) a very slow and doubtful one to all pretended Prophets now, the happy consequent would be the freedom of the world at last from these ancient cheats, for these little Oracles (like those of old) would soon become less talkative if men were once become less credulous; and God would no more be look'd for in the *whirl-wind* of raptures, mystical phrases, and ecstasical Orations, but in the *still voice* of a great humility, a sound mind, and an heart reconciled to himself and all the world; and they would begin to believe God knows better what is good for us than we do our selves, while hiding futurities from us, that so we might not be discomposed by any joys, sorrows or fears born out of due time; and they would cast anchor onely upon his Promises and Attributes, when *afflicted with all his waves*, and value them as sufficient security to the peace and quiet of their minds in the worst of Evils. Finally all the Ends the Devil

seeks to serve upon such Prophecies would be happily defeated; who if they chance to hit, fails not to possess the *Deliverer* of them with an impregnable perswasion that he is God's *Holy One*, his (*Urim*) sacred Oracles being found with him; and the *Receiver* with such great Opinions of them as shall render him curious, credulous, anxious, impertinent in his studies, and regardless of the known rules of life. But if they miss, he tempts men to a suspicion of all Prophecy for the sake of the false, and to regard even the Revelations of Scripture but as more venerable impostures.

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F I N I S.

# The Contents of the Treatise of Vulgar PROPHECIES.

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CHAP.

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**ERRATA.**

**T**reat. Prod. pag. 347. l. 8. for is r. *ibem*. Treat. Prophecies,  
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